

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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BLACK SHEEP!

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LAND AT LAST," "KISSING THE ROD,"
etc. &c.

CHAPTER IV. IN THE BALANCE.

Not one word came from Mrs. Carruthers for full six weeks. The hope which had sprung up in George Dallas's breast after the interview with his mother in the housekeeper's room had gone through the various stages common to unfulfilled desires in men of sanguine temperaments. It had been very bright at first, and when no letter came after the lapse of a week, it had begun to grow dim, and then he had endeavoured to reason with himself that the very fact of no letter coming ought to be looked upon as a good sign, as showing that "something was doing." Then the absence of any news caused his hope to flicker until the recollection of the old adage, that "no news was good news," made it temporarily bright again; then as the time for payment of the renewed bill grew nearer and nearer, so did George Dallas's prospects become gloomier and yet more gloomy, and at last the light of hope went out, and the darkness of despair reigned paramount in his bosom. What could his mother be about? She must have pretended that she had some bill of her own to pay, and that the money was immediately required; old Carruthers must have questioned her about it, and there must have been a row; she must have tried to "collar" the amount out of the housekeeping—no! the sum was too large; that was absurd! She had old friends—people who knew and loved her well, and she must have asked some of them to lend it to her, and probably been refused; old friends always refuse to lend money. She must have tried—confound it all, he did not know, he could not guess what she had tried! All he did know, to his sorrow, was, that she had not sent the money; all he knew, to his joy, was, that though he was constantly seeing Stewart Routh, that worthy had, as yet, uttered no word of discontent at its non-appearance.

Not he! In the hand which Stewart Routh was at that moment playing in the greater game of life, the card representing a hundred and forty pounds was one on which he bestow'd very little attention. It might, or it might not, form part of the odd trick, either way; but it had

very little influence on his strategy and finesse. There were times when a five-pound note might have turned his chance, but this was not one of them. Driven into a corner, pressed for the means of discharging paltry debts, harassed by dunning creditors, Stewart Routh would have needed and claimed the money due to him by George Dallas. Present circumstances were more favourable, and he only needed George Dallas's assistance in his schemes. For, Stewart Routh's measures for raising money were of all kinds and of all dimensions; the elephant's trunk of his genius could pick up a five-pound-note bet from a flat at *carte*, or could move the lever of a gigantic city swindle. And he was "in for a large thing" just at this time. Men attending professionally the betting-ring at the great steeple-chase then coming off, noticed Routh's absence with wonder, and though he occasionally looked in at two or three of the second-rate sporting clubs of which he was a member, he was listless and preoccupied. If he took a hand at cards, though from mere habit he played closely and cautiously, yet he made no great points, and was by no means, as usual, the dashing Paladin round whose chair men gathered thickly, and whose play they backed cheerily. No! The paltry gains of the dice-box and cards paled before the glamour of the fortune to be made in companies and shares; the elephant's trunk was to show its strength now, as well as its dexterity, and the genius which had hitherto been confined to "bridging" a pack of cards, or "securing" a die, talking over a flat or winning money of a greenhorn, was to have its vent in launching a great City Company. Of this scheme Dallas knew nothing. A disinherited man, with neither name nor influence, would have been utterly useless; but he was reserved for possible contingencies. Routh was always sending to him to call, always glad to see him when he called, and never plagued him with allusions to his debt. But in their interviews nothing but mere generalities were discussed, and George noticed that he always received a hint to go, whenever Mr. Deane was announced.

But although Stewart Routh was seen but seldom in his usual haunts, he was by no means inactive or neglectful of his own interests. Day after day he spent several hours in the City, diligently engaged in the formation of his new Company, a grand undertaking for working

some newly discovered silver mines in the Brazils ; and day after day were his careful scheming, his elaborate plotting, his vivacious daring, and his consummate knowledge of the world, rewarded by the steady progress which the undertaking made. The temporary offices in Tokenhouse-yard were besieged with inquirers ; good brokers with City names of high standing offered their services ; splendid reports came from the engineers, who had been sent out to investigate the state of the mines. Only one thing was wanting, and that was capital ; capital, by hook or by crook, Mr. Stewart Routh must have, and was determined to have. If the affair were to be launched, the brokers said, the next week must see it done ; and the difficulty of raising the funds for the necessary preliminary expenses was becoming day by day more and more palpable and insurmountable to Stewart Routh.

The interval of time that had witnessed so much activity on the part of Mr. Stewart Routh, and had advanced his schemes close to a condition of imminent crisis, had been productive of nothing new or remarkable in the existence of George Dallas. That is to say, on the surface of it. He was still leading the desultory life of a man who, with an intellectual and moral nature capable of better deeds and nobler aspirations, is incurably weak, impulsive, and swayed by a love of pleasure ; a man incapable of real self-control, and with whom the gratification of the present is potent, above all suggestions or considerations of the contingencies of the future. He worked a little, and his talent was beginning to tell on the popularity of the paper for which he worked, *The Mercury*, and on the perceptions of its proprietors. George Dallas was a man in whose character there were many contradictions. With much of the fervour of the poetic temperament, with its sensuousness and its sensitiveness, he had a certain nonchalance about him, a fitful indifference to external things, and a spasmodic impatience of his surroundings. This latter was apt to come over him at times when he was apparently merriest, and it had quite as much to do with his anxiety to get his debt to Routh discharged, and to set himself free from Routh, as any moral sense of the danger of keeping such company, or any moral consciousness of the waste of his life, and the deterioration of his character. George Dallas had no knowledge of the true history of Routh's career ; of the blacker shades of his character he was entirely ignorant. In his eyes, Routh was a clever man, and a good-for-nothing, a "black sheep" like himself, a sheep for whose blackness Dallas (as he did in his own case) held circumstances, the white sheep, anything, and everything except the man himself, to blame. He was dimly conscious that his associate was stronger than he, stronger in will, stronger in knowledge of men, and somehow, though he never defined or acknowledged the feeling to himself, he mistrusted and feared him. He liked him, too ; he felt grateful to him for his help ; he did not discern the interested motives

which actuated him, and, indeed, they were but small, and would by no means have accounted for all Routh's proceedings towards Dallas. Nor is it necessary that they should ; a villain is not, therefore, altogether precluded from likings, or even the feebler forms of friendship, and Dallas was not simply silly and egotistical when he believed that Routh felt kindly and warmly towards him. Still, whether a merciful and occult influence was at work within him, or the tide of his feelings had been turned by his stolen interview with his mother, by his being brought into such positive contact with her life and its conditions, and having been made to realise the bitterness he had infused into it, it were vain to inquire. Whatever his motives, however mixed their nature or confused their origin, he was filled, whenever he was out of Routh's presence, and looked his life in the face, with an ardent longing to "cut the whole concern," as he phrased it in his thoughts. And Harriet ?—for the "whole concern" included her, as he was forced to remember—Harriet, the only woman whose society he liked—Harriet, whom he admired with an admiration as pure and respectful as he could have felt for her, had he met her in the least equivocal, nay, even in the most exalted position. Well, he would be very sorry to lose Harriet, but, after all, she cared only for Routh ; and he was dangerous. "I must turn over a new leaf, for her sake" (he meant for his mother's), "and I can't turn it while they are at my elbows." From which conviction on the part of George Dallas it is sufficiently evident that Routh and Harriet had ample reason to apprehend that Dallas, on whom they desired to retain a hold, for more reasons than one, was slipping through their fingers.

George Dallas was more than usually occupied with such thoughts one morning, six weeks after his unsuccessful visit to Poynings. He had been very much with Routh and Deane during this period, and yet he had begun to feel aware, with a jealous and suspicious sense of it, too, that he really knew very little of what they had been about. They met in the evening, in pursuit of pleasure, and they abandoned themselves to it ; or they met at Routh's lodgings, and Dallas surrendered himself to the charm which Harriet's society always had for him. But he had begun to observe of late that there was no reference to the occupation of the earlier part of the day, and that while there was apparently a close bond of mutual confidence or convenience between Routh and Deane, there was some under-current of mutual dislike.

"If my mother can only get me out of this scrape, and I can get the Piccadilly people to take my serial," said George Dallas to himself one morning, when April was half gone, and "the season" was half come, "I shall get away somewhere, and go in for work in earnest." He looked, ruefully enough, round the wretched little bedroom, at whose small window he was standing, as he spoke ; and he thought impa-

tiently of his debt to his coarse shrewish land-lady, and of the small liabilities which hampered him as effectually as the great one. It was later than his usual hour of rising, and he felt ill and despondent: not anxious to face the gay, rich, busy world outside, and still less inclined for his own company and waking thoughts in the shabby little den he tenanted. A small room, a mere apology for a sitting-room, was reached through a rickety folding-door, which no human ingenuity could contrive to keep shut, if any one opened the other door leading to the narrow passage, and the top of the steep dark staircase. Through this yawning aperture George lounged disconsolately into the little room beyond, eyeing with strong disfavour the preparations for his breakfast, which preparations chiefly consisted of a dirty tablecloth and a portion of a stale loaf, popularly known as a "heel." But his gaze travelled further, and brightened; for on the cracked and blistered wooden chimney-piece lay a letter in his mother's hand. He darted at it, and opened it eagerly, then held it for a moment in his hand unread. His face turned very pale, and he caught his breath once or twice as he muttered:

"Suppose it's to say she can't do anything at all." But the fear, the suspense were over with the first glance at his mother's letter. She wrote:

"Poynings, 13th April, 1861.

"My dear George. I have succeeded in procuring you the money, for which you tell me you have such urgent need. Perhaps if I admired, and felt disposed to act up to a lofty standard of sentimental generosity, I should content myself with making this announcement, and sending you the sum which you assure me will release you from your difficulties, and enable you to commence the better life on which you have led me to hope you are resolved. But, not only do the circumstances under which I have contrived to get this money for you, make it impossible for me to act in this way, but I consider I should be very wrong, and quite wanting in my duty, if I failed to make you understand, at the cost of whatever pain to myself, the price I have had to pay for the power of aiding you.

"You have occasioned me much suffering, George. You, my only child, to whom I looked in the first dark days of my early bereavement, with such hope and pride as I cannot express, and as only a mother can understand—you have darkened my darkness and shadowed my joy, you have been the source of my deepest anxiety, though not the less for that, as you well know, the object of my fondest love. I don't write this to reproach you—I don't believe in the efficacy of reproach; but merely to tell you the truth—to preface another truth, the full significance of which it may prove very beneficial to you to understand. Sorrow I have known through you, and shame I have experienced for you. You have cost me many tears, whose marks can never be effaced

from my face or my heart; you have cost me infinite disappointment, bitterness, heart-sickness, and domestic wretchedness; but now, for the first time, you cost me shame on my own account. Many and great as my faults and short-comings have been through life, deceit was equally abhorrent to my nature, and foreign to my habits. But for you, George, for your sake, to help you in this strait, to enable you to release yourself from the trammels in which you are held, I have descended to an act of deceit and meanness, the recollection of which must for ever haunt me with a keen sense of humiliation. I retain enough of my former belief in you, my son, to hope that what no other argument has been able to effect, this confession on my part may accomplish, and that you, recognising the price at which I have so far rescued you, may pause, and turn from, the path leading downward into an abyss of ruin, from which no effort of mine could avail to snatch you. I have procured the money you require, by an expedient suggested to me accidentally, just when I had begun utterly to despair of ever being able to accomplish my ardent desire, by a conversation which took place at dinner between Mr. Carruthers and his fatigued solicitor, Mr. Tatham. The conversation turned on a curious and disgraceful family story which had come under his knowledge lately. I need not trouble you to read, nor myself to write, its details; you will learn them when I see you, and give you the money; and I do not doubt, I dare not doubt, George, that you will feel all I expect you to feel, when you learn to how deliberate, laborious, and mean a deception I have descended for your sake. I can never do the same thing again; the expedient is one that it is only possible to use once, and which is highly dangerous even in that one instance. So, if even you were bad and callous enough to calculate upon a repetition of it, which I could not believe, my own dear boy, I am bound to tell you that it never could be. Unless Mr. Carruthers should change his mind, consequent upon an entire, radical, and most happy change in your conduct, all pecuniary assistance on my part must be entirely impossible. I say this, thus strongly, out of the kindest and best motives towards you. Your unexpected appearance and application agitated and distressed me very much; not but that the sight of you, under any circumstances, must always give me pleasure, however closely pursued and overtaken by pain. For several days I was so completely upset by the recollection of your visit, and the strong and desperate necessity that existed for repressing all traces of such feelings, that I was unable to think over the expedients by which I might procure the money you required. Then as I began to grow a little quieter, accident gave me the hint upon which I have acted secretly and safely. Come down to Poynings in three days from this time. Mr. Carruthers is at present away at an agricultural meeting at York, and I can see you at Amherst, without difficulty or danger. Go to the

town, but not to the inn. Wait about until you see my carriage. This is the 13th. I shall expect you on the 17th, by which day I hope to have the money ready for you.

"And now, my dear boy, how shall I end this letter? What shall I say? What can I say that I have not said again and again, and with sadly little effect, as you will not deny? But I forbear, and I hope. A feeling that I cannot define, an instinct, tells me that a crisis in my life is near. And what can such a crisis in my life mean, except in reference to you, my beloved and only child? In your hands lies all the future, all the disposition of the 'few and evil' years which remain to me. How are you going to deal with them? Is the love, which can never fail or falter, to be tried and wounded to the end, George, or is it to see any fruition in this world? Think over this question, my son, and let me read in your face, when I see you, that the answer is to be one of hope. You are much changed, George, the bitterness is succeeding the honey in your mouth; you are 'giving your strength for that which is not meat, and your labour for that which satisfieth not,' and though all the lookers-on at such a career as yours can see, and always do see, its emptiness and insufficiency plainly, what does their wisdom, their experience, avail? But if wisdom and experience come to *yourself*, that makes all the difference. If you have learned, and I venture to hope you have, that the delusive light is but a 'Will of the Wisp,' you will cease to pursue it. Come to me, then, my boy. I have kept my word to you, at such a cost as you can hardly estimate, seeing that no heart can impart *all* its bitterness to another; will you keep yours to me?

"C. L. CARRUTHERS."

"What does she mean? What can she mean?" George Dallas asked himself this question again and again, as he stood looking at the letter in his hand. "What *has* she done? A mean and deliberate deceit—some dishonourable transaction? My mother could not do anything deserving to be so called. It is impossible. Even if she could contemplate such a thing, she would not know how to set about it. God bless her!"

He sat down by the table, drew the dingy Britannia metal teapot over beside his cup, and sat with his hand resting idly upon the distorted handle, still thinking less of the relief which the letter had brought him, than of the mysterious terms in which it was couched.

"She can't have got it out of Carruthers without his knowing anything about it?" he mused. "No; besides, getting it from *him* at all, is precisely the thing she told me she could not do. Well, I must wait to know; but how good of her to get it! Who's the fellow who says a man can have only one mother? By Jove, how right he is!"

Then George ate his breakfast hastily, and, putting the precious letter in his breast-pocket, went to Routh's lodgings.

"I dare say they're not up," he thought, as he knocked at the door, and patiently awaited the lingering approach of the slipshod servant. "Routh was as late as I was last night, and I know she always sits up for him."

He was right; they had not yet appeared in the sitting-room, and he had time for a good deal of walking up and down, and much cogitation over his mother's letter, before Harriet appeared. She was looking anxious, Dallas thought, so he stepped forward even more eagerly than usual, and told her in hurried tones of gladness that the post had brought him good news, and that his mother was going to give him the money.

"I don't know how she has contrived to get it, Mrs. Routh," he said.

"Does she not tell you, then?" asked Harriet, as she eyed with some curiosity the letter which Dallas had taken out of his pocket, and which he turned about in his hand, as he stood talking to her. As she spoke, he replaced the letter in his pocket, and sat down.

"No," he answered, moodily, "she does not; but she did not get it easily. I know—not without a very painful self-sacrifice; but here's Routh."

"Ha! Dallas, my boy," said Routh, after he had directed one fleeting glance of inquiry towards his wife, and almost before he had fairly entered the room. "You're early—any news?"

"Very good news," replied Dallas; and he repeated the information he had already given Harriet. Routh received it with a somewhat feigned warmth, but Dallas was too much excited by his own feelings to perceive the impression which the news really produced on Routh.

"Is your letter from the great Mr. Carruthers himself?" said Routh; "from the provincial magnate who has the honour of being step-father to you—your magnificent three-tailed bashaw?"

"Oh dear no!" said the young man, grimly; "not from him. My letter is from my mother."

"And what has she to say?" asked Harriet, quickly.

"She tells me she will very shortly be able to let me have the sum I require."

"The deuce she will!" said Routh. "Well, I congratulate you, my boy! I may say I congratulate all of us, for the matter of that; but it's rather unexpected, isn't it? I thought Mrs. Carruthers told you, when you saw her so lately, that the chances of her bleeding that charming person, her husband, were very remote."

"She did say so, and she was right; it's not from him she's going to get the money. Thank Heaven for that!"

"Certainly, if you wish it, though I'm not sure that we're right in being over-particular whence the money comes, so that it does come when one wants it. What is that example in the Eton Latin Grammar—'I came to her in season, which is the chief thing of all'? But if not from Mr. Carruthers, where does she get the money?"

"I—I don't know; but she does not get it without some horrible self-sacrifice; you may depend on that."

"My dear George, Mrs. Carruthers's case is not a singular one. We none of us get money without an extraordinary amount of self-sacrifice."

"Not a singular one! No, by George, you're right there, Routh," said the young man, bitterly; "but does that make it any lighter for her to bear, or any better for me to reflect upon? There are hundreds of vagabond sons in England at this moment, I dare say, outcasts—sources of shame and degradation to their mothers, utterly useless to any one. I swear, when I think of what my mother must have gone through to raise this money, when I think of the purpose for which it is required, I thoroughly loathe myself, and feel inclined to put a pistol to my head, or a razor to my throat. However, once free, I—there—that's the old can again!"

As the young man said these words, he rose from his chair, and fell to pacing the room with long strides. Stewart Routh looked up sternly at him from under his bent brows, and was about to speak; but Harriet held up a finger deprecatingly, and when George Dallas seated himself again, and, with his face on his hands, remained moodily gazing at the table, she stole behind him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"I know you would not intentionally wound *me*, Mr. Dallas," she said. "I say, you would not intentionally wound *me*," she repeated, apparently in answer to his turning sharply round and staring at her in surprise; "but you seem to forget that it was I who counselled your recent visit to your mother, and suggested your asking her for this sum of money, which you were bound in honour to pay, and without the payment of which you—who have always represented yourself as most dear to her—would have been compromised for ever. I am sorry I did so, now that I see my intentions were misunderstood, and I say so frankly."

"I swear to you, Har—Mrs. Routh—I had not the slightest idea of casting the least imputation on your motives; I was only thinking—You know I'm a little hot on the subject of my mother, not without reason, perhaps, for she's been a perfect angel to me, and—one can't expect other people to enter into these things; and, of course, it was very absurd. But you must forget it, please, Mrs. Routh, and you too, Stewart. If I spoke sharply or peevishly, don't mind it, old fellow!"

"I?" said Routh, with a crisp laugh. "I *don't* mind it; and I dare say I was very provoking; but you see I never knew what it was to have a mother, and I'm not much indebted to my other parent. As to the money, George—these are hard times, but if the payment of it is to drive a worthy lady to distress, or is to promote discord between you and me, why, in friendship's name, keep it, I say!"

"You're a good fellow, Stewart," said Dallas, putting out his hand; "and you, Mrs. Routh,

have forgiven me?" Though she only bowed her head slightly, she looked down into his face with a long, steady, earnest gaze. "There's an end of it, then, I trust," he continued; "we never have had words here, and I hope we're not going to begin now. As for the money, that must be paid. Whatever my mother has had to do is as good as done, and need not be whined over. Besides, I know you want the money, Stewart."

"That's simply to say that I am in my normal state. I always want money, my dear George."

"You shall have this, at all events. And now I must be off, as I have some work to do for the paper. See you very soon again. Good-bye, Stewart. The cloud has quite passed away, Mrs. Routh?"

She said "Quite," as she gave him her hand, and their eyes met. There was eager inquiry in his glance; there was calm, steadfast earnestness in hers. Then he shook hands with Routh, and left the room.

The moment the door closed behind him, the smile faded away from Routh's face, and the stern look which it always wore when he was preoccupied and thoughtful, settled down upon it. For a few minutes he was silent; then he said in a low voice: "Harriet, for the first time in your life, I suppose, you very nearly mismanaged a bit of business I entrusted to you."

His wife looked at him with wonder-lifted brows. "I, Stewart? Not intentionally, I need not tell you. But how?"

"I mean this business of George's. Did not you advise him to go down and see his mother?"

"I did. I told him he must get the money from her."

"A mistake, Harry, a mistake!" said Routh, petulantly. "Getting the money means paying us; paying us, means breaking with us?"

"Breaking with us?"

"Nothing less. Did you not hear him when the remorseful fit was on him just now? And don't you know that he's wonderfully young, considering all things, and has kept the bloom on his feelings in a very extraordinary manner? Did you not hear him mutter something about 'once free'? I did not like that, Harry!"

"Yes, I heard him say those words," replied Harriet. "It was my hearing them that made me go up to him and speak as I did."

"That was quite right, and had its effect. One does not know what he might have done if he had turned rusty just then. And it is essential that there should not be a rupture between us now."

"George Dallas shall not dream of breaking with us; at least, he shall not carry out any such idea; I will take care of that," said Harriet, "though I think you overrate his usefulness to us."

"Do I? I flatter myself there is no man in London forced to gain his bread by his wits who has a better eye for a tool than myself. And I tell you, Harry, that during all the time

we have been leading this shifty life together, we have never had any one so suitable to our purposes as George Dallas."

"He is certainly wonderfully amenable."

"Amenable? He is a good deal more than that; he is devoted. You know whose doing that is, Harry, and so do I. Why, when you laid your hand on his shoulder I saw him shiver like a leaf, and the first few words from you stilled what I thought was going to be a heavy storm."

She looked up anxiously into his face, but the smile had returned to his lips, and his brow was unclouded. Not perfectly satisfied, she suffered her eyes to drop again.

"I know perfectly well," pursued Routh, "that the manner in which Dallas has stuck to us has been owing entirely to the influence you have over him, and which is natural enough. He is a bright young fellow, impressionable as we all are—again her eyes were raised to his face, "—at his age; and though from the scrapes he has got into, and his own natural love of play (more developed in him than in any other man I ever met), though these things keep him down, he is innately a gentleman. You are the only woman of refinement and education to whose society he has access, and as, at the same time, you have a sweet face and an enormous power of will, it is not extraordinary that he should be completely under your influence."

"Don't you overrate that same influence, Stewart?" she asked, with a faint smile.

"No man knows better how to appraise the value of his own goods—and you are my goods, are you not, Harry, and out and away, the best of all my goods? Not that that's saying much. No; I understand these things, and I understand you, and having perfect confidence and trust in you, I stand by and watch the game."

"And you're never jealous, Stewart?" she asked, with a half laugh, but with the old expression of anxious interest in her eyes.

"Jealous, Harry? Not I, my love! I tell you, I have perfect trust and confidence in you, and I know your thorough devotion to our affairs. Let us get back to what we were talking about at first—what was it exactly?"

Her eyes had dropped again at the commencement of his reply, but she raised them as he finished speaking, and said, "We were discussing the amount of George Dallas's usefulness to us."

"Exactly. His usefulness is greater than it seems. There is nothing so useful in a life like ours as the outward semblance of position. I don't mean the mere get up; that, most fools can manage; but the certain something which proclaims to his fellows and his inferiors that a man has had education and been decently bred. There are very few among our precious acquaintances who could not win Dallas's coat off his back, at cards, or billiards, or betting, but there is not one whom I could present to any young fellow of the smallest appreciation whom I might pick up. Even if their frightful

appearance were not sufficiently against them—and it is—they would say or do something in the first few minutes which would awake suspicion, whereas Dallas, even in his poverty-stricken clothes of the last few weeks, looks like a gentleman, and talks and behaves like one."

"Yes," said Harriet, reflecting, "he certainly does; and that's a great consideration, Stewart!"

"Incalculable! Besides, though he is a thorough gambler at heart, he has some other visible profession. His 'connexion with the press,' as he calls it, seems really to be a fact; he could earn a decent salary if he stuck to it. From a letter he showed me, I make out that they seem to think well of him at the newspaper office; and mind you, Harriet, he might be uncommonly useful to us some day in getting things kept out of the papers, or flying a few rumours which would take effect in the money market or at Tattersall's. Do you see all that, Harry?"

"I see it," she replied; "I suppose you're right."

"Right? Of course I am! George Dallas is the best ally—and the cheapest—we have ever had, and he must be kept with us."

"You harp upon that 'kept with us.' Are you still so persuaded that he wishes to shake us off?"

"I am. I feel convinced, from that little outburst to-night, that he is touched by this unexplained sacrifice on the part of his mother, and that in his present frame of mind he would give anything to send us adrift and get back into decent life. I feel this so strongly, Harriet," continued Routh, rising from his seat, crossing to the mantelshelf, and taking a cigar, "that I think even your influence would be powerless to restrain him, unless—"

"Unless what? Why do you pause?" she asked, looking up at him with a clear steadfast gaze.

"Unless," said Routh, slowly puffing at his newly-lighted cigar, "unless we get a fresh and a firm hold on him. He will pay that hundred and forty pounds. Once paid, that hold is gone, and with it goes our ally!"

"I see what you mean," said Harriet, after a pause, with a short mirthless laugh. "He must be what they call in the East 'compromised.' We are plague-stricken. George Dallas must be seen to brush shoulders with us. His garments must be known to have touched ours! Then the uninfected will cast him out, and he will be reduced to herd with us!"

"You are figurative, Harry, but forcible: you have hit my meaning exactly. But the main point still remains—*how* is he to be 'compromised'?"

"It is impossible to settle that hurriedly," she replied, pushing her hair back from her forehead. "But it must be done effectually, and the step which he is led to take, and which is to bind him firmly to us, must be irrevocable. Hush! Come in!"

These last words were in reply to a knock at the room door. A dirty servant-girl put her tangled head into the room, and announced "Mr. Deane" as waiting down-stairs. This statement was apparently incorrect, for the girl had scarcely made it before she disappeared, as though pulled back, and a man stepped past her, and made one stride into the middle of the room, where he stood looking round him with a suspicious leer.

He was a young man, apparently not more than two or three-and-twenty, judging by his figure and his light active movements; but cunning and deceit had stamped such wrinkles round his eyes, and graven such lines round his mouth, as are seldom to be seen in youth. His eyes, of a greenish-grey hue, were small and deeply sunk in his head; his cheek-bones were high, his cheeks fringed by a very small scrap of whisker running into a dirt-coloured tuft of hair growing underneath his chin. His figure was tall and angular, his arms and legs long and awkward, his hands and feet large and ill shaped. He wore a large thick overcoat with broad fur collar and cuffs, and a hood (also fur-lined) hanging back on his shoulders. With the exception of a very slight strip of ribbon, he had no cravat underneath his long limp turnover collar, but stuck into his shirt-front was a large and handsome diamond pin.

"Why, what the 'tarnal,' he commenced, placing his arms a-kimbo and without removing his hat—"what the 'tarnal, as they say down west, is the meaning of this little game? I come here pretty smart often, don't I? I come in gen'ly right way, don't I? Why does that gal go totin' up in front of me to-day to see if you would see me, now?"

"Some mistake—eh?"

"Not a bit of it! Gal was all right, gal was. What I want to know is, what was up? Was you a practisin' any of your little hankey-pankeys with the pasteboards? Was you a bitin' in a double set of serip of the new company to do your own riggin' of the market? Or was it a little bit of quiet con-nubiality with the mar-darm here in which you didn't want to be disturbed?"

Stewart Routh's face had been growing darker and darker as this speech proceeded, and at the allusion to his wife his lips began to move; but they were stopped by a warning pressure underneath the table from Harriet's foot.

"You're a queer fellow, Deane!" he said, in a subdued voice. "The fact is, we have a new servant here, and she did not recognise you as *Pami de la maison*, and so stood on the proprieties, I suppose."

"Oh, that's it—eh? I don't know about the proprieties; but when the gal knows more of me, she'll guess I'm one of 'em. Nothing improper about me—no loafin' rowdy ways such as some of your friends have. Pay my way as I go, ask no favours, and don't expect none." He gave his trousers-pockets a ringing slap as he spoke, and looked round with a sneering laugh.

"There, there! It's all right; now sit down, and have a glass of wine, and tell us the news."

"No," he said, "thank'e. I've been liquorin' up in the City, where I've been doin' a little business—realising some of them Lake Eries and Michigans as I told you on. Spanking investments they were, and have turned up trumps."

"I hope you're in the hands of an honest broker," said Routh. "I could introduce you to one who—"

"Thank'e, I have a great man to broke for me, recommended to me from t'other side by his cousin who leads Wall-street, New York City. I have given him the writings, and am going to see him on Tuesday, at two, when I shall trouser the dollars to the tune of fifteen thousand and odd, if markets hold up, I reckon."

"And you'll bring some of that to us in Tokenhouse-yard," said Routh, eagerly. "You recollect what I showed you, that I—"

"Oh yes!" said Deane, again with the sinister smile. "You could talk a 'coon's hind leg off, you could, Routh. But I shall just keep my dollars in my desk for a few days. Tokenhouse-yard can wait a little, can't it? just to see how things eventuate, you know."

"As you please," said Routh. "One thing is certain, Deane; you need no Mentor in your business, whatever you may do in your pleasures."

"Flatter myself, need none in neither," said the young man, with a baleful grin. "Eh, look here, now: talking of pleasures, come and dine with me on Friday at Barton's, at five. I've asked Dallas, and we'll have a night of it. Tuesday, the 17th, mind. Sorry to take your husband away, Mrs. R., but I'll make up for it some day. Perhaps you'll come and dine with me some day, Mrs. R., without R.?"

"Not I, Mr. Deane," said Harriet, with a laugh. "You're by far too dangerous a man."

Mr. Deane was gone; and again Stewart Routh sat over the table, scribbling figures on his blotting-pad.

"What are you doing, Stewart?"

"Five dollars to the pound—fifteen thousand," he said, "three thousand pounds! When did he say he would draw it?"

"On Tuesday, the—the day you dine with him."

"The day I dine with him! Keep it in his desk, he said, for a few days! He has grown very shy about Tokenhouse-yard. He hasn't been there for a week. The day I dine with him!" He had dropped his pen, and was slowly passing his hand over his chin.

"Stewart," said Harriet, going behind him and putting her arm round his neck—"Stewart, I know what thought you're busy with, but—"

"Do you, Harry?" said he, disengaging himself, but not unkindly—"do you? Then keep it to yourself, my girl, and get to bed. We must have that, Harry, in one way or another; we must have it."

She took up a candle, pressed her lips to his

forehead, and went to her room without a word. But for full ten minutes she remained standing before the dressing-table buried in thought, and again she muttered to herself: "A great risk! A great risk!"

ART WITH ITS WINGS ON.

I AM, sir, the identical sole and solitary Theodore, artist's model, as has already lucubrated in your eminently national journal. Again I take up my pen to throw off a few (slowly, but I trust not extreme) sentences reflecting on Park-lane, the railings of the same locality, the Row converging on the same location—by which expression signifying the Riot, not the Rotten—and the swiftest pictor ever yet wafted (on the painter's own wings) to the utmost heights of the blue emporium, over and aloft our mortal sphere.

Who, sir, as like me, has nourished predilections for Park-lane's vicinity, will ever forget the foreboding day merged in dusky eve of July 23rd proximo, of the analys of Hyde Park? What I may think of Reform and its associates, is neither here nor there. That my leanings have ever tended to decorum, and the observance of fixed classes, so as to avert the wave which broke over France, when our enemies Queen was led to the stake with fires fermented by democratical fury, is not to be wondered at in one as for so many gay joyful years took his part in aristocracy's orbit—never having lived in untitled families. But I do not set myself up as politic—or seeing so far as them as sits in parliament, and contracts popular force by aid of the Radical newspapers. If so be their tenets is lower than my order thinks tasteful, who am I to sit and judge? Them as would, are as bad every inch, as the Pope. Implicititude is not a poor mortal's task; so long as thoughts soars in liberative freedom; for some will have their velvets, while lowlier portions of creation confine themselves within calico.

But points there are, with which those in the widest pale of reflective animosity must agree in taking a firm view of. Let us be Tories or Whigs, as persons have genteel tendencies, or otherwise vulgar. Some defends bribery as a fundement of our constitution. Mr. Clover, the quondam lord's butler, was such, and rattle his pockets, he would, when hustings and the pole, and treating voasters with beer was discussed. Others may go the length of avowing woman's sex, capable to take open part in measures of legitimization, even to sitting on the woolsack. But truth before politeness, or the struggles of opposition, and nought save Party's phrensy would not coincide that Roughs is a bad lot, and no necessary evil—whether they throw stones, and dishivel property, and pick pockets, and employ aggravating terms, be it on the blue side of the shield or the yellow one, or equal the green, which the Irish presume as Liberality's colour. Reform, if them as wants it can get, so let it be—but Roughianism to the winds, must every candid heart of Briton say.

And Roughianism—too sincerely prevalent on

many recent junctures, whether lashed up by inspectors or detectors, who shall say?—was predominate over Reform that July eve, as many a black eye and empty purse bitterly thought of the morrow, and how nobody could hear what the leaders of the populace express, I can asseverate from my own incapacity; also, a confusion above the left eye, and my hair watch-guard reft from me—last relict of better days—which had survived my watch, and was worn to keep up apearances. Howinoent spectators, including the female sex—some of whom ovirously as had babies in arms, and, as such, merely cared to see what was going on—were trampled, tossed to and fro like a field of corn, and betwixt the Roughians and the Reformers, and the Police, and them prancing Life Guards on their chargers (always an object to the fair sex), did not know which way to run, and was knocked down among the broken rails, and otherwise molested, your confident eye-witness could swear in any court of offence. And raly, sir, was not these innoxious victims of innocent curiosy a fitter theme for official tears than the ill-bestowed folk, who came express to breed riotous plunder? such parties, as I have heard say, was absolutely befriended with fines, when they was convicted as due, on the subsequent morning. But true to preamble. That I was on the spot, a helpless atom in that horrifying tornado, my aching bones and my left coat-tail ripped off, acquainted me for many a day, and self-examination resuming her throne, said, "Theodore, what business took you there?" No more Reform and Roughian meetings for me, take my word for the tickit.

Judge, sir, if my pulse did not bound, when a recent paragraph greeted my eye, which spoke to my bruised spirit like the benignant halcion of a more propitious era. The want of a reader, with dramatrical elements, was proclaimed, who was publicly to analize and exhibit the pictorial world's wonder, the graphic record—executed against time and over and above truth—of the conflict of the Roughs and the Reformers with the bloted aristocracy and their maidens A. B. C., and respective police divisions of the alphabet, in which I had born so sad momentous a *role*. "Theodore," said I (hope springing eternal within me), "it was not for nothing as you haunted the Park that 23rd of July proximo."

Who, sir, would not thrill, on reading the advertised description of the Riot in Hyde Park, "painted against time, by" (according to the press) "the swiftest pictor of the age," which proceeded the calls for a competent first-class reader? "Theodore, albeit," said I, made eager by sapient experience to bridal Hope's soaring delusions, "one must allow for self-praise and devotion to art, which is only so much human vanity—but I never heard speak of Rafel, or Sir Joseph, as painted the Rake a la Mode, or even Mr. Bloxome, over his Disobedient Prophit, putting themselves in print as violent as was here transacted. All is not gold as glitters," and so I reigned in my transported feelings, and, with a calm yet throbbing step, mounted the stairs of

the Pantheon, among them lot of—well, if I said they was daubs, the magority, it would be no label. But distances figures by comparison. Them pictures as I took for foils as going in, on issuing out assumed a importience raly wonderful to relate; and to warn other candidatial readers, I can make a *terra firma* affidavit that "the Great Picture," save for the treatise in the papers, which had beguiled my hopes, was not worth threepence or the new nectie I had startied—as due to the occasion.

To begin with the simfony, as we say at the opera. "In order," says the program, "to combine classic beauty, pictorially, with those passions that deeply stir the human heart, the artist elected to take the Marble Arch for the centre of the Picture, reserving a large foreground for the ample display of the main incidents of that extraordinary scene, including all kinds of combats—the removal of the wounded—picking pockets, nigger minstrels fighting the police, and various comic incidents. In the middle distance the mass of people rush into the Park with banners, breaking down the railings from Park-lane, after forcing one of the gates with a lamp-post. Sir Richard Mayne in the centre, on a white horse, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Walpole and Captain Harris, points with his finger, and the police charge vigorously both in solid column and irregular bodies, occasionally dealing a side blow on some straggler with a brickbat in his hand. The crowd receive them with a terrific shower of bricks, stones, bottles" &c.

Sir, I looked my eyes out of my head, like Coelebs in search of the pictoral classic beauty, to which Truth fell a victim. Now was the central gate of the Marble Arch forced? correspondents may enquire. And did Sir Richard pint with his finger in *Mr. Walpole's* society on horseback? And as the bill later asevered, was Lord Shaftesbury, and other popalous benefactors of the aristocracy a-riding that way, to inspirit the Roughs by enjoying the turbulent scene? There was a precious lot of comedy—so be out-of-the-way drawing is such. And if the police in the picture was not figures of fun—hoping, cropping, droping, stoping (see, valued sir, how I dividges natural into rime), tumbling upside down—and assuming other dramatrical pripensities, mostly like the letter Q in a child's copy-book gone mad, I never see a simptom of drollery, even in *Punch*. I am similar with well-disposed men as cuts horses, and Bengal tigers, and other specimens of animal humanity, and Shems with partnors, gratis, for Noah's Arks; so yet that their quadrapeds, though not paradoed for the *Times*, by Mr. Sprat and Mr. Cremer, and other propitors of juvenile sports, have sufficed the living models in this great picture, I am prepared to deposit in any court of justice.

Then as how to continue the quotatious self-praise, and description of matters as hardly never occurred or transpirated, follows underwise:

"The Duke of Sutherland leads a policeman into the porter's lodge, who has received a fearful wound on the head."

But, lord, sir, his Grace, in place of being prostrate or profl, or even his beloved public back, is a mere white coat on the rear, and, if so be the cheapest of raps as is ready made, in point of apparel, I would have declined it as a misfit, in the days of the golden past.

Lastly, we was promised "with his arm round the identical chimney, taking notes, the clever 'correspondent' of the *Times*."

Sir, I may have valeted that gentleman or the reverse, and I may know his tricks and manners, as Sir Christopher Wren's granddaughter has prest herself elsewhere in fictious parlance; but I will deposit, as a loyal subject, that I neither was aware of correspondent, still less chimney, on the occasion of viewing the Great Picture.

A NEW VIEW OF AN OLD RIOT.

I HAVE a few remarks to make on a very old event, which I believe are entirely new, and which, though the event is of anything but world-wide importance, will not, I trust, be found wholly without interest.

The event is the attack made by the London Prentices on the Cockpit Theatre in the years 1616-17; the remarks will be on the motive of that attack, which have never, in my opinion, been exactly hit upon, though the signs of its existence lie on the very surface of the story.

As everybody does not read Mr. Payne Collier's *Annals of the Stage*, and works of that description, I must briefly describe the event, at the risk of fatiguing the more erudit reader.

On Shrove Tuesday, then, in the year before mentioned, a mob, headed by apprentices, made an attack on the Cockpit Theatre, in Drury-lane, which had been either recently built, or recently converted from a cockpit into a play-house, and which was occupied by a company of actors who had previously played at the Red Bull, and were called, in reference to Queen Anne (of Denmark), the "Queen's servants." According to Camden, they pulled the house down and destroyed the "apparatus"—that is to say, the wardrobe and properties; and, although the venerable historian seems rather to have mistaken the will for the deed, as far as the demolition of the house is concerned, there is no doubt that they did considerable damage, and, at all events, destroyed doors, windows, dresses, and play-books.

The details of the exploit are described in a contemporary ballad written in praise of the apprentices, especially Thomas Brent and John Cory, who were evidently leaders on the occasion. Of this ballad, which was first brought to light by Mr. Payne Collier, I give an expurgated edition, without apology, as it will prove more amusing than my lucubrations:

The 'Prentices of London long

Have famous been in story,

But now they are exceeding all

Their chronicles of glory :

Look back, some say, to other day,

But I say look before ye,

And see the deed they now have done,

Tom Brent and Johnny Cory.

Tom Brent said then to his merry men,
 "Now, whoop, my men, and hollow,
 And to the Cockpit let us go,
 I'll lead you like brave Rollo."
 Then Johnny Cory answered straight,
 In words much like Apollo:
 "Lead, Tommy Brent, incontinent,
 And we'll be sure to follow."

Three score of these brave 'Prentices,
 All fit for works of wonder,
 Rush'd down the plain of Drury-lane
 Like lightning and like thunder.
 And then each door with hundreds more,
 And windows burst asunder;
 And to the tire-house broke they in,
 Which some began to plunder.
 "Now hold your hands, my merry men,"
 Said Tom, "for I assure you
 Whoso begin to steal shall win
 Me both for judge and jury,
 And eke for executioner,
 Within this lane of Drury;
 But tear and rend, I'll stand your friend,
 And will uphold your fury."

King Priam's robes were soon in rags,
 And broke his gilded sceptre;
 False Cressid's hood, that was so good,
 When loving Troilus kept her.
 * * * * *

Had Theseus seen them use his queen
 So ill, he had bewept her.

Books old and young on heap they flung,
 And burn'd them in the blazes,
 Tom Dekker, Haywood, Middleton,
 And other wand'ring crazies:
 Poor Day that day not scap'd away,
 And what still more amazes,
 Immortal Cracke was burn'd all black,
 Which ev'rybody praises.

Now sing we loud with one accord,
 To these most digni laude,
 * * * * *

And praise we these bold 'Prentices,
 Cum voce et cum corde.

Before dismissing the ballad, I may observe that King Priam and Cressida were possibly the characters of that name in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, possibly belonged to some other play, as this was the property of the "King's servants," who acted at the Blackfriars and the Globe, that Theseus was probably the character of that name in Hayward's Silver Age, and that the immortal and universally praised Cracke is so far shorn of immortality, that nobody at present knows whether the name refers to a man or a play. These observations are not mine but Mr. Collins's, but I take leave to confirm his theory respecting the Silver Age, by calling attention to the fact, that Thomas Hayward was one of "Queen Anne's servants," and to suggest that we have a right to infer from the context, that the mysterious Cracke was not a tragedy, but a dramatic poet. Day, I may add, wrote several plays, that have not, I think, been reprinted since their first publication, and seems to have been famous for "bilking" his landlord. In the last verse, which, for the sake of decorum, I have so grievously shorn of its dimensions, theatres and immorality

are associated together, and people are advised to thrust plays and bad company out of doors. When I have added that some of the rioters were severely punished, and that, after a short interval, the "Queen's servants" were again performing at the Cockpit, I have concluded the entire story.

Now, according to the view commonly taken of this little disturbance, so disgraceful in the opinion of some, so glorious in the opinion of others, the riotous apprentices were representatives of the puritanical feeling which was so prevalent in the City during the whole of the seventeenth century, and which, even in the sixteenth, had been manifested by a strong hostility towards theatrical amusements. Partly animated by a spirit of what our cousins call "rowdyism," but powerfully influenced by a conviction that theatres were unfavourable to morality, these noisy zealots, availing themselves of a licence long conceded to their order on Shrove Tuesday, attempted to demolish the new theatre in Drury-lane. This is evidently the view which the writer of the ballad intends his readers to take; but it is equally evident, that if by his last verse he wishes to shed a puritanic halo round an outbreak of blackguardism, he is himself no Puritan. He has at his fingers' end the names of the leading dramatists; indeed, he makes one's mouth water when he shows how well he is acquainted with the once immortal but now exceedingly defunct Cracke; he can compare Tom Brent to Rollo, the principal character in Fletcher's Bloody Brother, and he knows how various parts are dressed. The whole ballad, indeed, breathes a roystering spirit, which savours much more of the factious man-about-town than of the religious zealot.

What is there in the riot itself that denotes a puritanical movement? There were other theatres open beside the Cockpit, and a mob determined to extinguish the drama would rather have directed their efforts against the Blackfriars, which was the very head-quarters of the enemy, the house at which the works of Shakespeare and other poets of the highest repute were produced. The Cockpit, after all, enjoyed but a Brummagem sort of gentility, and could scarcely be regarded as a representative establishment. The consideration of these facts leads me to the supposition that the Cockpit was punished for certain sins of its own, and not merely because it was a place devoted to theatrical amusements.

Let me digress a little. It is well known that in the early days of the English stage, theatres were divided into "public" and "private." An exhaustive definition of these terms has not yet been obtained. We are certain that the so-called "private" theatres were not inaccessible to the public, like those attached to a gentleman's mansion; but it may be generally laid down that a system of exclusiveness belonging to one class of theatre distinguished it from the other. Without going through the seven marks of distinction deduced by Mr. Collier from various authorities, we may confine our attention to the facts that the

"private" theatres were entirely roofed in from the weather, and had pits furnished with seats, whereas the area of the "public" theatre consisted of a yard, in which the spectator stood, and which was exposed to the weather, the roof only protecting the boxes, and that even with respect to the boxes, there was this distinction, that at the "private" theatres there were private boxes in the modern sense of the word, whereas at the "public" theatres there was nothing of the sort. That the "private" theatres were intended for the recreation of a higher, more luxurious, and more refined class than the public, there is no doubt. The three "private" houses in the olden time were the Blackfriars, the Cockpit, and a theatre in Salisbury-court; all the rest appear to have been "public." Of these the Globe, situated on the Surrey side of the water, belonged, as well as the Blackfriars, to the King's servants, who used it during the summer. Probably, therefore, the rank of the Globe was higher than that of the other "public" theatres; but, at the same time, we may suppose that the King's servants valued their summer less than their winter audiences, and that when they crossed the water they somewhat resembled the tragic "stars" of modern times, who, when the central theatres are closed, condescend to play in the remote suburbs.

Though they then seem to have no cheap galleries, we may infer from Hamlet's advice to the players, that the occupants of the area constituted the lowest section of the theatrical public; but I have sometimes felt puzzled when I heard the Prince tell of the "periwig-pated fellow who could split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb show and noise." The subjects of Queen Victoria are less turbulent than those of Queen Elizabeth or King James, but I question whether the humbler section of a modern audience would sit patiently while one of the personages on the stage, speaking words intended to be wise, went on saying to another, "This would do very well for the roughs in the gallery, who like nothing but trash and rant, but when you come to the educated ladies and gentlemen in the stalls, that is another affair." Why, on the first day of the performance of Hamlet, did the "groundlings" consent to be so unceremoniously rated? Let us suppose that the word "groundling" only referred to the standing spectator of the area of a "public" theatre, and could not be applied to the seated occupant of the pit of the Blackfriars, where the play was produced, and the difficulty vanishes at once. This hypothesis, of course, implies that the two kinds of theatre belonged to totally different strata of society.

To return to our "riot." It is very clear that even among the "public" houses, the Red Bull, which stood at the upper end of St. John-street, Clerkenwell, did not stand in high repute. It was decidedly an unfashionable house, and at the beginning of the reign of James the First, its patrons were recreated by the performances of the "Queen's servants." But

shortly after the completion of the Cockpit, these same "Queen's servants" migrated to Drury-lane, and acted in the new house. This connexion between the Red Bull and the Cockpit seems to have been long maintained, and as late as 1630 we find the performers at both mentioned as belonging to the same order of badness.

Now the Cockpit, as we have seen, was a "private" theatre, with all the exclusiveness proper to such establishments. This fact held fast, we come, I think, to the real cause of the "riot." The "groundlings" and other "roughs" of the Red Bull, regarding themselves as the natural patrons of "Queen Anne's servants," who were not a bit too good for them, follow their inconstant favourites to a more fashionable house, and find themselves encountered by a system of high prices, private boxes, and "exclusions" of every sort. Under these irritating circumstances a feeling is generated, which consists partly of that spirit of class hatred which was manifested some years since at New York, during the engagement of Mr. Macready, and was partly a demonstration against the "Upper Ten," partly by that dislike of advanced prices which distinguished the O. P. riots of Covent Garden in 1809. Puritanical prejudice, implying an abhorrence of the actor's profession, might possibly have had some influence, by giving a sort of sanction to the outrage, just as the rowdies of New York might have fancied themselves actuated by a patriotic feeling, when assailing an English actor, who seemed to interfere with a native favourite. But the puritanical element, if it had any influence at all, was merely subordinate. The aristocratic "King's servants," who played at the Blackfriars, and were the real representatives of the drama, were not attacked, because they had done nothing to offend the London mob. "Queen Anne's servants," as renegade pets of the democracy, had offended the mob grievously, and therefore were marked out for destruction.

A BOTANIST'S ADVENTURE.

WHEN I was twenty, botany was my passion. Indeed, I am not sure that I am cured of it yet. I never sit in a railway carriage and feel myself borne at fierce express speed through a green landscape without remembering regretfully those days when I lingered on the wild mountain-side, or plunged, eager and ardent as a knight of romance, into the depths of the forest. His quest was beauty in distress to deliver, or mighty Paynim giant to lay low; mine was to discover some fair flower sleeping in the shade of ancient trees, or to snatch some cruel poisonous weed from its lair. The knight was a happy knight, I have no doubt; but I do not think he could be a happier man than John Graves, your humble servant.

France was the scene of my chief exploits in those days. My father had left England for economy's sake, and settled at some distance from Paris. The country around our home was not interesting, botanically speaking; and I was in

the habit of taking long and solitary excursions. During one of these I met with an adventure.

I had spent the morning on the skirt of a forest. Towards noon I entered it, rested awhile, then started again. Ere long I came to a spot where many avenues—seven, I believe—met, and whence they radiated like the points of a star. In the middle of this open space rose a tall and slender pyramid, with a gilt ball on the top. This was the very heart of the forest. Not a soul was visible; not a stately deer or a frightened hare disturbed the silence of the spot. The solemn trees rose around me, leaving a circular roof of sky above, then they divided into their long seven lonely alleys. It was grand and very fine, but it was also very depressing. I sat down on the lowest of the three steps, above which rose the pyramid, a picture of the past flitting before me.

Here, if tradition spoke true, often came that gay hunter, Francis the First, and after him his son Henri, both with the same lady huntress. Perhaps she was only a sort of prime minister after all, as some historians declare. Tastes vary so. Some kings like a pale Cardinal de Richelieu, and others (like these two) a Diana of Poitiers, fair-haired and blue-eyed, who, if she now and then sat to Primaticio as the goddess Flora, also caused that haughty medal to be struck, in which she appears trampling Love under her feet, with the imperious motto, "I have conquered the conqueror of all." But, oh! what din, what tumult, what hallooing of hounds and trampling of horses there was in those days, and how sadly quiet these good people were all now. Ages pass, and Diana is replaced by Fontanges, who ties up her hair with a wonderful ribbon that sends the world mad, or we see that pretty Madame d'Etiolles in this very forest lying in wait for a king's heart, and dying later—rare honour!—in Versailles, under the name of Madame de Pompadour; but other variety we must not expect.

I got tired of these phantoms as I sat thus at the base of the pyramid. I got tired, too, of those endless avenues stretching for ever away before me; so I rose and struck into one, walking fast, yet glancing right and left in search of botanical treasures. I found none, but saw a strange abundance of a pale variety of the Solanum tribe. I gathered a bunch, then a few ferns, and, wearied with my profitless day, I quickened my pace, to get out of the forest before nightfall.

I must have been very near the outskirts when my adventure began. I saw nothing, but I heard, in a thicket on my right hand, a low, plaintive, and not unmelodious whistle. I stood still to listen, and it ceased. Presently it was repeated, and something gliding in the grass near me made it move and rustle. I looked, but the creature, if it were one, was already gone. The whistle sounded again, but at some distance from me; and further away, too, the motion I had already perceived was repeated. It was too dark already for me to distinguish more than

that motion of the grass, and it told me nothing. Again the whistle was renewed, but so far away or so faintly that I could scarcely hear it. Then it ceased, or I heard it no more.

I was perplexed. I had seen nothing, neither human being, nor beast, nor bird. The trees were scarce, the thickets were stunted, the grass was poor and thin, and a few moss-covered rocks which were scattered about were too low to conceal even a child. Yet some one had been near me, and something had passed within my reach, which was not, however, within my knowledge. I was armed with a stout stick. I beat the bushes, and only startled a little harmless bird from its nest. I went round the rocks to explore them, and found a few mosses, which I put in my tin box; and this was the sole result of my quest. It was useless to pursue it; the greyness of evening was stealing on me fast, and the country before me looked flat and desolate.

I am not sure that I ought to go on, and tell the reader what follows. I have called it an adventure, and many will think that it scarcely deserves the name. But I believe that adventures are half the time productions of our own mood. I believe they spring from something within us, which, if I may so speak, calls them into existence, as the voice of the enchanter wakens spirits in the old tales of sorcery. Some people cannot have adventures—there is no sympathy between the spirit of adventure and them; and others cannot stir but, lo! some adventure starts up, like the little wicked diablotin in the French toy. I belong to neither class, and have neither more nor less than my share of this doubtful commodity; but the adventurous mood was on me this day, and would not let me rest.

I walked on, only thinking of reaching some village by nightfall, when I heard again the low whistle I had heard in the forest. This time it came from some distance, and it stole so faintly over the silent plain that, but for the evening stillness, I could not have heard it at all. I saw no one, but a low hedge which straggled through the fields might conceal a man easily. I was walking in the opposite direction to this. I altered my course at once. I soon reached the hedge, but saw no token of the whistler; no great marvel after all. The path in which I now found myself was a narrow winding one, which delved down to a little valley. Here, as I soon perceived, clustered a few houses, where lights were already twinkling like mild glowworms.

The first of these houses I entered. The door was open, so I was spared the trouble of knocking. In my best French I bade its tenant a good evening, and asked for a drink, and the way to an inn, if such a thing was to be found in the vicinity. A man looked up from the fireplace, where he was stirring something in an iron pot. He returned my salutation, and civilly replied that I could have a drink of milk if I pleased, and that the nearest inn was a league off. I was tired to death, and asked if I might rest awhile.

"Certainly, sir," replied the man, rising to

hand me a rush-bottomed stool. "Would you like some bread with your milk? You seem fatigued."

I thankfully accepted.

"Prudence," he said, raising his voice, "give some milk to monsieur."

The door of an inner room opened, and Prudence came forth, bearing a tin candlestick with a flaring tallow candle in it. The man was a common peasant, tanned, red-cheeked, coarse, and good-humoured looking. I saw dozens such daily; but his wife was wholly unlike him, unlike any woman I had ever seen. She was middle-sized, but so slender that she looked tall. She wore a close black jacket and dark petticoat, that left her feet and ankles bare. They were small and well made, so were her hands. Her neck, too, was long and slender, without being thin; her head was remarkably small, but flat and not well shaped. Her face was narrow and very sallow, with thin mobile features, and the strangest little glittering brown eyes. She had black hair, and wore no cap, and though by no means ugly, she was, to me at least, a very repelling-looking person.

"Milk," she answered; "certainly."

She put down her light, fetched a tin from a shelf, and filling a coarse crockery cup with rich-looking milk, she handed it to me. Her motions were graceful, and her smile and look meant to be courteous; but I had something to do, not to betray my instinctive horror of this woman. I thanked her as graciously as I could, and praised her cow. She smiled (her smile only made matters worse), and said:

"I have no cow—we are too poor for that."

"I walk a league every day for that milk," put in the husband, who was still stirring the contents of the iron pot on the fire. "Give the loaf to monsieur, Prudence."

She obeyed, and I remarked:

"You are fond of milk?"

"We never drink any," she replied, smiling again; "we are too poor."

I did not think it civil to ask what Madame Prudence did with the contents of the tin can—a large one—since she could not afford to drink milk; so I ate and drank in silence.

I hoped to leave the cottage as soon as I had done, and reach the inn which the man had mentioned; but it was not to be. A sudden flash of light filled the room, then a loud thunder-peal followed, and after it came a fierce rush of rain. The man crossed himself, and Prudence coolly went and shut the door behind me. It was a terrible storm, a fierce and a long one. The thunder rolled and rolled, and the rain poured and poured, and Prudence and her husband sat down to their plateful of soup each, and went through it with perfect equanimity, whilst I walked up and down the room in silent vexation. I do not know, indeed, why I was so vexed at this trifling delay; I half fancy it was because of the little restless eyes of Prudence. I tried to avoid them, but could not. Wherever I went, they seemed to follow me; and as she sat with

her back to the wall, it was impossible to shun them by getting behind her.

The storm did not cease, or even grow less, and Prudence said, very civilly:

"Perhaps monsieur would like to spend the night here? I can go and sleep with a neighbour, and make up a bed for my husband in this room. Our bed is a good one."

"Thank you," I replied, hurriedly; "I must go on."

"Monsieur can scarcely go on to-night," replied Prudence, with her smile; "there is no inn within a league; the way to it is across the country, and the men about here are too great poltroons to show monsieur the way in such a storm as this."

The latter remark was uttered with a quick scornful glance at her husband, who sullenly muttered something about not being afraid, but did not volunteer to be my guide.

I had no alternative. It was getting late. I had no right to intrude any longer on these people unless I accepted their offer, and, in spite of the eyes of Prudence, I did accept it. She rose and went into the inner room to prepare it for me. It was a relief to think that I should soon be out of her sight. In the mean while I tried to get some desultory information from her husband, but his plateful of soup had made him sleepy, and, as nature had also made him stupid, I soon gave him up. Before long, Prudence came out, and, with her smile, informed monsieur that everything was ready. Monsieur took the candlestick from her hand, and, muttering ungracious thanks, entered his apartment.

My first care was to fasten the door, but, as there was no lock to it, I had to barricade it. Two chairs and a table did the thing. I protest that I apprehended no personal danger; I only feared that Prudence would come in and look at me. It was not likely she would do so; she was not to sleep in the cottage; besides, the temptation of seeing me in my slumbers, with a handkerchief tied round my head, might not be irresistible; but fear and reason have nothing in common, and fear, being strong, prevailed and had her way. My room, though small, was clean, and the bed justified Prudence's eulogium. It was a very good bed indeed. I was tired, and I was young. In five minutes I was fast asleep.

Heaven save my worst enemy from such slumbers, or rather from such dreams, as I had! The whole night long, Prudence and I were striving for mastery, and every time we engaged in combat she prevailed against me. We never came to blows, but it was a fell and cruel struggle for all that. When I tried to strike her, she laughed, and my hand fell back powerless; then with her supple and nervous arms, strong as steel, she would embrace me, and tighten her hold, and look at me with a smile, until I shrieked with terror, and asked for mercy—which I never got. I do not know how the fight ended, but it began again and again, without a particle of variety. I believe this dreadful monotony wearied me as much as the struggle itself. I know that

when I woke I was in a profuse perspiration. The greyness of early morning stole in through my little window. I saw the whitewashed walls adorned with a few prints, devotional or warlike, but nailed in the plaster, and frameless. This was the only bit of feminine embellishment—and it might as well have come from the husband as from Prudence—which betrayed the presence of a woman. There was no pincushion on the chest of drawers, and no flower-pot outside the window; everything was cold, bare, and comfortless-looking. It was rather ungracious in me to be thus criticising Prudence's domestic arrangements, whilst I was lying in her bed; but I owed her a grudge for the night she had given me, and I went on commenting without scruple. Ere long I paused. I stared, and could not believe what I saw to be real; and yet, if seeing be believing, I was not deceived. At the foot of the bed, strung on a slender reed like her-rings, I saw a row of black vipers. The reed itself was fastened to two nails in the wall.

I have a horror of serpents; the sight of them alone is hateful to me. I sprang out of bed, I bundled on a few clothes, I kicked the chairs away from the door, and entered the kitchen in a passion.

"What do you mean by poisoning me with those abominable reptiles?" I asked of the man, who was already up and busy. "How dare you make me sleep in a room with a set of vipers?"

I so startled him that, in his confusion, the poor fellow dropped my tin box, which he had been examining.

"They are dead, sir," he said, apologetically. This exasperated me.

"Of course they are dead. A pretty thing if they were alive and crawling!"

"They would bite you if they were alive, sir," he replied.

The fellow's incorrigible stupidity calmed me. It was useless to argue, and I wanted to know why those abominable creatures were there. I put the question to him.

"We always keep them there, lest any one should come and steal them," he replied; "they are worth ten sous apiece now."

I began to understand the facts of the case. These people killed vipers, and got the government reward for doing so.

"You pursue a dangerous trade, my good fellow," I said; "be careful."

"It is Prudence who does it; she has the secret, only she will not tell it to me. I have begged and prayed for it again and again, but she will not give it to me. She says two cannot have it, for if two had it, it would kill her. Now, you know, that is hard upon me," he continued, "for suppose she dies. I am left destitute."

"And have you no idea how she does it?" I asked.

"I know she takes milk out with her, and I have heard her whistle; and once I came home unexpectedly, and I caught her making a sort of fisane, and—monsieur may believe me—she was

boiling her pot on the fire yonder, and threw in handfuls of that very herb monsieur has got there."

He pointed to the contents of my tin box. I took the withered herbs.

"That," I said, "is the—"

I had no time to end the sentence. A hand snatched the weeds from mine, and Prudence thrust her face between us.

"Monster! Devil!" she shrieked. "Do you want to kill me?—to kill me?"

She was in a frightful rage, but her pale face was not disturbed; it was the face I had seen all night—cruel, relentless, abhorrent—to me, at least—but not otherwise altered. It was her husband whom she addressed, and he slunk away like a detected hound. His wife's anger was as brief as it was violent; she gave him a look of contempt, then turned to me smiling.

"Has monsieur slept well, and will he have any breakfast?" she asked, smoothly. "We shall soon have beautiful milk."

Now, it was prejudice, of course, but I could not make up my mind to drink milk in Prudence's house; it would have tasted "viperish" to me, though the cow that gave it had been the fair Io herself. I declined Prudence's courtesy with brief thanks, entered my room, and finished dressing. Within five minutes I had paid my bill, and was on my road to the inn in the next village, with Prudence's husband as my guide. I did not need his services, but I could see the poor wretch wanted to get away from his wife, whose eye, when it fell upon him, took a particularly evil expression; moreover, I was not sorry to have a chat with him. I had no need to draw him out; he was fasting and lively now; besides, he wanted to explain why Prudence had got into such a passion, or rather why he had submitted to her fury so patiently. "You see, sir," he said, "she is a good girl, is Prudence—a little quick at times, but a good girl; and then she was a good match for me. The secret has been in her family for more than a hundred years; it has gone down from father to son, or to daughter, as the case might be, and all these girls have been sought after and have made good matches, whereas I had not a farthing."

"How came she to marry you?" I asked.

He looked at me and smiled.

"She could not help herself, sir; she was fond of me, you see."

"Why will she not tell you the secret? You could both go hunting and catching vipers."

Prudence's husband looked ill used.

"She will not," he said, sullenly. "She says that if it were known to more than one person at a time, the vipers would bite her and kill her. Now, that is an idea, as I tell her."

Every one has an idea in France, so I was not surprised at this remark of Prudence's husband, but I was surprised by what he told me. Did Prudence really believe that the revelation of her secret would destroy her power?

"Did not monsieur see and hear her? Did she not call me a monster, a devil, and ask if I wanted to kill her, and all because I had that bit of herb in my hand? But I have more of it," he added, nodding shrewdly, "and I will make the tisane when she is out. I will! You see, monsieur, it is a hard case. Prudence had the secret from her mother on her death-bed, and she had it from her father in the same way; but suppose Prudence dies suddenly. She cannot give it to me in that case, and there I am!"

"Then she has promised to tell it to you on her death-bed?"

"To be sure she has; I would not have married her without. But, as I said; suppose she dies suddenly?"

"Perhaps there is no secret," I suggested, sceptically.

"Oh yes there is. Prudence never meddled with vipers before her mother died, though she always had a serpent or two about her."

"A serpent! And about her?"

"Yes, sir; she liked the creatures; she used to have them coiled round her body to keep her cool in hot weather, she said; and when she was a girl, and frolicsome, she would run after the other girls with a pet snake she had, and frighten them. She was very fond of it, but it vexed her one day, and she killed it."

"Did she ever make a pet of a viper?"

"No, she is afraid of vipers," he replied, confidentially; "but she sometimes kills six in a day, and they are worth ten sous apiece now. It is hard that she will not tell me the secret."

I comforted him with a franc, which I slipped into his hand as we at length reached the inn and parted company. "Now," I thought, as I sat down to a decent cup of coffee with no viper associations about it, "who says the middle ages are dead? Here is a mediæval state of things. This woman believes in her charm, whatever it may be, and goes forth to meet the viper, with the faith of a hero wearing enchanted armour. Take that faith away, and her natural fear comes on and masters her. And yet how suited she is to that occupation such as it is!—she is a feminine viper. She has the creature's serpentine grace, and its deadly look. I have no doubt that it feels an affinity towards her, and goes to its perdition with a kind of pleasure. She whistles, and it comes; she feeds it, and it drinks; when it is stupefied and torpid, I suppose she coolly kills it, puts it on a hank, brings it home, and thereby earns ten sous. Yet this creature could feel love, and could bestow her regard on that brutish lump, her husband, who is only contemplating the possibility of her sudden death, and the pecuniary loss such a calamity could entail upon him."

A pretty servant-girl was waiting upon me. She had a frank communicative face; and as soon as I had opened my lips to say at whose house I had passed the night, she was ready, good soul, with a torrent of words.

"Ah! good Heavens, she would not have slept

at Prudence's for the whole world. The woman dealt in witchcraft, else how could she talk to vipers and make them dance around her, then kill and sell them for twelve sous apiece?"

"Ten," I corrected; "and the vipers do not dance, mademoiselle."

"I beg monsieur's pardon. My own great-aunt saw them dancing around Prudence's grandfather, and of course they do the same now."

I suggested that these were degenerate days, and that vipers might have lost their ancient gift; but I was not heeded.

"It was witchcraft. Prudence took a drink which made the vipers come when she breathed upon them. But see you; that same drink made her sallow, and Prudence was never in good health. It would not end well. Prudence had gone mad about her husband, and forced him to marry her, when she might have had a much better match in my informant's own uncle. But it would not end well. Mathieu" (I now learned his name) "would have no peace till he found out the secret. Once he discovered it, the vipers could set upon Prudence and bite and kill her."

The topic of Prudence having been fully exhausted by the time I had despatched my first course, I ordered a second, and turned to the more congenial theme, botany. I did not utter that barbarous word; but I inquired if dusty gentlemen, who had evidently seen some hard work, wandered about the country gathering weeds, which they safely stowed away in tin boxes.

"Oh yes!" was the eager reply, "I have seen them. Does monsieur know what they do with those weeds?"

I shook my head in solemn mystery.

"I suppose they sell them," said my pretty waitress, looking pensive; "they cannot fetch much."

"Less than vipers, I assure you; but what direction do those poor fellows usually take?"

The explanation which followed was a tedious one, and is not worth repeating. Suffice it that I left the inn an hour after this, and that I struck into a path which was to conduct me to the other end of the forest which I had explored on the preceding day.

The day was burning hot; the forest was oppressively close; but my tin box overflowed with some of the choicest plants I had ever found. It was a glorious day. I felt exultant and happy. I forgot fatigue, hunger, and thirst; but I also forgot the directions the pretty girl at the inn had given me, and the consequence was that I got lost in the forest. Now, this was not pleasant. The day was well-nigh spent, and even Prudence's bed would have been a more acceptable couch than the bare earth at the root of a tree. Better dead vipers on a hank, than live vipers at liberty. I had read that the viper is a slandered animal, which never attacks man; but just then my faith in such general maxims was loose. I remembered the seven avenues I had seen on the preceding day, and I wondered if I

could not find one of them, and thence the central pyramid. Give me that, and certain landmarks I recollect, would take me back to the village in which Prudence dwelt. Now, according to all the rules of romance, I ought to have wandered up and down the forest all night, and never found the pyramid. But these rules were reversed in the present instance. The first path I took led me to one of the seven avenues, and far away from me, indeed, but quite distinct, I saw the pyramid and its gilt ball glittering in the light of the setting sun. I took heart and walked fast, and reached it. But before I started on my next expedition I sat down at the foot of the pyramid, and rested a few moments. It was a divine evening. The long low rays of the sinking sun poured from the west down one of the avenues; fire and gold are nothing to the splendour which swept along the green earth up the old trunks of trees, and reached their topmost boughs in the rosiest hues. It was a magnificent spectacle; but I looked at my watch, and rose. I turned round the pyramid, then stood still. A woman was lying on the earth at my feet.

Asleep? I stooped; her eyes were fixed and open; her lips had parted in the gasp of her last agony; her face was livid. I knew it. This was the face of Prudence, the serpent-charmer, the viper-killer. She was dead. I took her swollen hand, with the marks of a fatal sting on it still; when I dropped it, it fell back loosely, with that inert weight which tells so much. She was dead—the woman whom I had seen all life and fury in the morning, and the red sunlight swept across her rigid face, and only seemed to render its sternness more apparent. How had it happened? Had she been surprised? Had she struggled with her enemy, as I had striven against her all night in my dreams? One thing I felt sure of; she had not been stung here. The fatal bite had been inflicted in some remote spot, whence she had crept to this; then the venom had seized her heart, till sight first, then life, had failed her. Remedies, if applied in time, might have saved her; but there had been no one at hand to give them. Exhaustion, the intense heat of the day, and something too, perhaps, in her own constitution, had quickened the action of the poison, and brought on this unusually sudden termination.

I stood and looked at her in a stupor. She lay on the very spot where I had sat twenty-four hours before, thinking of Diana of Poitiers and numerous dead men and women. And she, one of those strange-links which connect the present and the past, had gone to join them. Some ancestor of hers had been a viper-charmer in those days, and had, maybe, exhibited his skill in the royal presence, whilst another charmer looked haughtily on, conscious of equal power.

I left her there at the foot of the pyramid, on the cold earth, in the gathering darkness of evening, and I walked as fast as I could to the cottage I had left that morning. Save that no low whistle came stealing over the plain, every-

thing looked as it had looked on the previous evening. When I pushed open the door of Prudence's cottage, I again found her husband busy at the hearth cooking in the iron pot.

"Many vipers, Prudence?" he asked, without looking up.

"It is not Prudence," I said.

He turned round with a start, and knew me at once. He rose in sudden excitement.

"Monsieur, monsieur," he said, "you must tell me where you found that herb. It is the herb. I made the tisane to-day, and I have tasted Prudence's once, and it is the same; for—look!"

He went to the inner room, and came out with a dead viper two feet long.

"You killed that!" I said.

He nodded; then added, "I do not mean to tell Prudence just yet. She would be jealous; besides, I want to show her that two *can* have the secret."

How I broke the news I cannot remember; but the final words came out:

"Your wife is lying dead in the forest."

I had no need to add, "a viper has stung her." He knew it. He sank down on his stool, stared wildly, and, throwing up his hands, said:

"Ah, Heaven! Then it was true!"

This, and no more, was my adventure.

Two years later, indeed, I paid another visit to the forest, and met Mathieu. His right arm was in a sling, and with his left hand he was gathering dried sticks and withered boughs. He complained bitterly of his poverty. "Then you have not taken to viper-killing?" I said.

He shook his head gloomily.

"It cannot be done without the secret, and two cannot use it and live."

"But you need not tell it to any one."

He looked stily at me; and his look said: "She did not tell me, and yet I found it out." My impression is, that Mathieu feared I should take to viper-killing.

A word of warning. Some imprudent reader may, fancying that the Solanum I have alluded to was the herb used by Mathieu, be tempted to try it. To that reader I say, it was *not* the herb.

OUR LENGTHENING DAY.

THE lengthening day of spring, ladies and gentlemen, has often been compared to the smile of nature. The face of earth becomes more expansive, beaming with brightness, and wreathed with dimples. The fields laugh, and the forests sing for joy. Our lengthening day more resembles her frown. It is a grim threat, none the less terrible for menacing, mysterious, and unknown consequences. Length of days, in this sense, implies for us anything but length of life. And it is impossible to suppress the fact that our day is gradually growing longer and longer. When it shall have attained the length of a month—its utmost limit—the earth, as a residence, will be much less eligible than it is at present.

Permit me, ladies and gentlemen, to recall to your memory a few familiar but important scraps of knowledge, which everybody learns at school, and portions of which have to be unlearnt afterwards. What is our day? It might very naturally have been made the space of time elapsing between one noon and the noon which precedes or follows it. We find it more convenient, as well as more logical, to make it the time between midnight and midnight. Night, the time for sleeping, makes a better frontier between one day and another, than broad daylight, when men are alert and busy. For instance, the demarcation between to-day and to-morrow is hardly recognisable in countries and at seasons when there is no night—as up at Drontheim with the midnight sun.

But what make noon and midnight? I need not inform you that noon and midnight are the result of two circumstances, namely, of the earth's shape and of her motion.

First, as to shape: the earth, you are taught, is an oblate spheroid, that is, a sphere flattened at the poles, like an orange. It is no such thing, at least as far as the orange and its flatness are concerned. To enforce the idea that a very slight flattening does actually exist, its amount is grossly exaggerated by the comparison. It is really *very trifling*, microscopical.

The earth is a globe, a ball, which is all but a perfect sphere. The statement of its roundness is usually supported by a simple test, which cannot, however, be employed inland. If you stand on the shore and watch a steamer putting out to sea, it seems at first to be going up hill, as if it were climbing the slope of a mountain. Soon, it is on the edge of the horizon, perched, as it were, on the top of the hill. Then it goes down the other side of the hill, its lower part disappearing little by little, until nothing but the chimney and its smoke are visible. And then, after a while, it is gone altogether. The same circumstances happen, in inverse order, when the steamer comes into port from the offing. As the very same appearances occur, at whatever part of the world you observe vessels at sea, it necessarily follows that the earth's surface must be circular, and not flat.

But everybody does not dwell on or near the coast. Millions live and die without ever seeing the sea, and yet they are equally interested in the form of their terrestrial tenement. Let them notice, then, the clouds as they come and go, especially in a tolerably level country.

We are in the open air, just now, ladies and gentlemen, and not confined within the four walls of a lecture-room. We are looking southwards, and the wind is blowing dead ahead *from* the south. And there, on a level with the horizon, is the top of a great white cumulus cloud. It rises, and rises, like a ghost coming up from the stage trap of a theatre. It has already risen to half its height. It goes on rising. It is *all* above the horizon. We now see its base suspended in the air. It advances towards us. We are in its shadow. It is now overhead. It sails on grandly towards the north. Let us turn

round and follow its progress. We are in no hurry; there is plenty of time.

It goes away from us, sinking down lower the further it goes. Its base touches our northern horizon, and our ghostly visitor gradually descends, disappearing in an erect position, exactly like our supposed stage phantom. Nothing but its head is visible now. And now it is gone, down, down, down. This mode of appearance and disappearance could only be exhibited by a cloud floating, at the same elevation, in a spherical atmosphere enveloping a spherical planet.

The earth, being round, is represented by means of globes, of various dimensions, each size professing to furnish us with a diminished image of our world. But the earth is not exactly globular; it is flattened at the ends of its polar diameter. It spins round like a top, or turns like a joint roasting before the fire; and the axis on which it spins, the imaginary spit on which it roasts, is called the polar line, whose extremities are the north and south poles. Well on measuring the earth's thickness from one pole to the other, it is found to be less than if measured in the direction of the equator. But if we wanted to represent this flattening of the earth in a globe thirteen inches in diameter, it would be imperceptible to the eye and the touch, the difference between the two thicknesses being about the thickness of an egg-shell.

On the surface of the earth there are wrinkles and roughnesses which we call mountains, and consider immense. They are so, relatively *to us*; but to the earth they are as nothing. With all the pains taken by the manufacturer to render a thirteen-inch globe perfectly smooth, there will still remain a few asperities. The biggest of those asperities, as to height, might be taken to represent the elevation of Mont Blanc. How thin, then, must be our atmosphere, when there is found to be a difficulty in breathing on such slightly elevated mountain-tops! Surely we may call the earth an almost perfect sphere, slightly varnished over with an atmosphere. Our range of locomotion is limited to the thickness of the varnish. In it, we go up in balloons; in it, we fall down precipices and break our necks. Between the upper and the lower surfaces of this shallow film, the lightnings dart, the thunders growl, the rains and hails pelt, and the snows congeal. Our atmosphere is an enormous *Mul-tum in Parvo*.

The earth, which is round, is also in motion. Fancy a ball from a rifled cannon rushing onwards, and at the same time spinning on itself; fancy, while the ball is pursuing its journey, a multitude of infinitely small creatures to be produced on its surface, and you have a clear idea of the earth and its inhabitants. Only, the friction of the air, through which the cannon-ball moves, would sadly inconvenience its population; whereas the earth moves either through empty space or through an ether which offers no perceptible resistance.

Another point to be noted as explanatory of our lengthening day is, that all bodies have

weight; that is, every body has a tendency to fall *somewhere*, that somewhere being determined by the attraction exercised by other surrounding bodies. In other words, universal gravitation exists—a wonderful fact discovered by Newton. Now, a cannon-ball, shot out with slight velocity, would soon fall to the ground in consequence of the earth's attraction; and the greater the velocity with which it was projected, the greater would be the distance at which it would fall to the ground. Until we can conceive it shot with such a velocity that it would travel round and round the earth without ever falling upon it, the attractive centre being strong enough to prevent it from flying away altogether, and yet not strong enough to pull it down to itself.

Exactly as that cannon-ball would move round the earth, so does the earth travel round the sun, her speed of travelling being at the rate of about eighteen miles and a half per second; and the reciprocal attractions of the sun and the earth, and of the earth and the cannon-ball respectively, are not altogether too dissimilar for rough comparison. Represent the sun by a circle three inches in diameter, the earth will be represented by the full stop at the close of this sentence. The volume of the one is one million three hundred thousand times that of the other.

You have also, ladies and gentlemen, learned that the earth travels round the sun in an ellipse or oval; but the ellipticity, or length of the oval—like the flattening of the earth at the poles—has been much exaggerated in popular astronomies. You have seen your gardener trace an oval flower-bed. He fixes in the ground a couple of pegs connected by a slack bit of string; and, with a stick which keeps the string always stretched, he marks you out the oval required. The further apart the pegs are fixed, the longer will be the resulting oval; on the other hand, by bringing the pegs closer and closer together, you will at last get an ellipse which is hardly to be distinguished from a circle.

Such an ellipse is the earth's orbit round the sun. The places of the pegs are called the foci or focuses. The sun is not in the centre of the ellipse, but in one of the foci. The earth, therefore, is sometimes a little nearer to the sun (when it approaches the focus where the sun is placed) than at other times (when it goes away from it); and the nearer it is, the greater is the force of the sun's attractive power. The earth reaches the point of her ellipse, which is nearest to the sun, about the 1st of January, and that most distant from it about the 1st of July; but the difference of those distances is only trifling. Your eye would be unable to distinguish an exact tracing of the earth's orbit round the sun from the circumference of a perfect circle. While performing the whole tour of this circular orbit, the earth spins completely round nearly three hundred and sixty-six times, each complete spin making one of our days.

We are now approaching, ladies and gentlemen, the principal cause of our lengthening day. The earth is not alone in her celestial travels.

She is accompanied by an attendant much smaller certainly, but also very much nearer to her than the sun—so much so, in short, as to exert a considerably stronger attractive force. For the earth, take a globe six inches in diameter; the relative size of the moon will be shown by a ball a trifle more than an inch and a half through. The earth's volume is only about forty-nine times that of the moon. The moon, everybody knows, revolves round the earth, as the earth revolves round the sun; but, at the same time, the earth goes a little out of her way in consequence of the presence of the moon. In reality, they revolve round one another like two persons performing a waltz; and the couple annually whirl together round the sun in the circular orbit just described. In the moon's motion there exists, however, one remarkable peculiarity. While revolving round the earth, she also revolves on her own axis in such a way as always to keep the same face turned towards the earth.

The earth also revolves on her axis, but much more rapidly than the moon, making several turns (some eight-and-twenty) while *she* makes only one. The consequence is that, to the inhabitants of the earth, the moon appears successively to rise in the east (or thereabouts) and to set in the west. If, on the contrary, the earth had always the same hemisphere turned towards the moon, people living on the side next the moon would always behold it above the horizon. The moon would never rise nor set for them. There exists, therefore, this essential difference between the motions of the earth and the moon: the moon travels round the earth, always presenting the same face to her; whilst the earth turns on her axis, continually and successively presenting the different portions of her surface to the moon.

As the moon thus waltzes round the earth while both are waltzing together round the sun, the moon successively occupies different positions with respect to the sun. Sometimes (at new moon) she is on the same side as the sun, and sometimes (at full) on the opposite. Sometimes, therefore, her attraction pulls together with the sun's, and sometimes in a contrary direction. These pullings can effect a visible action only on that portion of the earth's surface which is capable of yielding to it, namely, the waters. And so, ladies and gentlemen, we have tides. On the shores of the ocean you must have observed that, for six hours or thereabouts, the waters flow, and then ebb for the six hours following.

Everything in nature attracts everything else. The earth attracts the moon, and the moon attracts the earth. If the earth were entirely solid, the moon's attraction would have the same effect as if applied to a single rigid body. But the earth is not entirely solid. It is covered with a certain quantity of water (forming a thin stratum relatively to the dimensions of our globe), which constitutes our seas and oceans.

The moon's attraction does not act under exactly the same conditions on the solid and the

liquid portions of the earth. The waters which are turned towards the moon, being nearer to it than the mass of the terrestrial globe, are subjected to a stronger attraction. For a like reason the waters on the opposite side are less strongly attracted than the mass of the earth. The result is, that, next the moon, the waters accumulate and form a protuberance, while, at the same time, they accumulate and form another protuberance on the opposite side.

If the earth and the moon remained always in the same position, it is clear that this phenomenon would be produced once for all. The ocean would experience a sort of swelling on the side next the moon and on that opposite; whilst, on the lateral portions, the level of the waters would be lowered.

But the earth is revolving upon her axis all the while she is being thus acted on by the moon, and therefore the liquid swelling takes place successively at different points of the earth's surface. Every instant the ocean tends to swell, both on the side next the moon and on the opposite side. But it is clear that the earth, by turning, tends to drag away with it the liquid protuberance which is formed in the direction of the moon. It is dragged away, in fact; it disappears little by little in proportion as it is carried away by the moon; it is re-made again at the same time at other points, to be carried away and disappear in turn. And so on, continually.

It follows that the liquid swelling is never exactly in the direction of the moon, or on the moon's meridian. As it is always being carried forward by the earth's rotation, it exists in reality a little further off, *beyond* the direction of the moon, *past* her meridian. The very friction of the waters in the basins of the sea, by checking the progress of the tidal wave, tends to maintain this obliquity of the position of the liquid protuberances in respect to the moon.

Now, when you want to slacken the revolution of a wheel, what course do you adopt to effect that object? You make use of friction. You put on a drag, or apply a brake, to prevent your carriage from running too fast down hill. Exactly so, the moon has clapped an ever-acting brake on the earth's rotation. The tidal wave runs *contrary* to the direction of that rotation. It chafes, and rasps, and wears away not only the shores, but also the bottoms of our shallow seas. It applies continual friction, tending to impede the spinning of our planet as she flies round her orbit. It affords the moon a handle by which to pull the earth continually back, and inevitably diminish the speed of her rotation.

There is another curious consideration connected with the subject. Whatever destroys, or tends to destroy, motion, thereby generates heat. The tidal wave, therefore, generates heat, which is partly radiated into space, and so lost to us. This incessant loss of heat is as continually supplied by the earth's rotation. The heat so generated is one of the few exceptions to the derivation of all heat, directly or indirectly, from the sun. Supposing, as Professor Tyndall puts the

case, that we turn a mill by the action of the tide and produce heat by the friction of the millstones; that heat has an origin totally different from the heat produced by another pair of millstones turned by a mountain stream. The former is produced at the expense of the earth's rotation; the latter at the expense of the sun's heat, which lifted the mill stream to its source.

No doubt such an influence bears on the permanence of our present terrestrial conditions. A change in them is going on. The check, however, thus put on the earth's revolution need cause no serious alarm, either to the existing generation, or to those who are soon to step into our shoes. True, in consequence of this preventive check, the length of our day is continually augmenting; because our days are the consequence of the earth's rotation on her axis. But the argumentation itself amounts to no more than one second of time in the course of one hundred thousand years.

There are eighty-six thousand four hundred seconds in a day of the current Anno Domini. If it requires one hundred thousand years for the day (in consequence of the earth's more sluggish rotation) to increase by the eighty-six thousand and four hundredth part of its length, it will take eight thousand six hundred and forty millions of years to cause that rotation to cease altogether, supposing the slackening of its speed to continue under the same conditions. Will it ever cease? Will the earth ever come to a standstill, as far as her rotation is concerned? No; she will not.

Her rate of spinning is gradually slackened, because she spins faster than the moon, who thereby raises the waters into a heap, converting them into a brake or drag. But when once the earth spins no faster than the moon, she will always have the same hemisphere turned towards her satellite; the liquid protuberance will be no longer carried forwards, and the moon will have no further hold whereby to check the earth's rotation. The period of the earth's rotation would then coincide with that of the moon's revolution round the earth. In short, the earth, at last, would constantly turn the same face to the moon, exactly as the moon turns the same to us.

It is only natural to suppose that the very same cause has produced the singularity which we observe in the movements of the moon. If she always turns the same face to the earth, the cause ought to be analogous to that now submitted to your consideration.

But things may not even go so far as that. As time slips away (and it requires a *great* many ages to realise the circumstances alluded to), the earth's temperature is expected gradually to drop. The waters of the ocean may be converted into ice; with no more water there will be no more tides; the cause of the slackening of the rotatory movement will disappear, and the earth will thenceforth continue to turn with a constant velocity.

The exact amount of the slackening is not yet known; it is ascertained approximately only by

the indications afforded by ancient eclipses. Its accurate determination must be a work of time. Meanwhile, ladies and gentlemen, it was right that you should be apprised of its existence.

UNEASY SHAVING.

I WONDER whether a man is more likely to be sleepless on the night before he is married, or on the night before he is hanged! I have experience of only the more blissful of these two kinds of anticipation; but I confess that the night before I was to be joined to my beloved Julia in the bonds of wedlock was one of the most restless I ever passed in my life. I am a timid man, a nervous man, a man ever painfully conscious of all his defects and deficiencies, but never before had I felt such a poignant regret that I could not add a couple of inches to my stature; and when I reflected that I had never had the courage to reveal to Julia a carefully concealed bald spot on my head, which she would now be sure to discover, to my shame and confusion, my remorse was terrible. Then I thought of that dark little parlour behind my shop in the dingy village where I lived, and I felt how dull Julia would find it after always sitting engaged in tasteful millinery-work at her front first-floor window in even that quiet street of our country town.

The fact is—and I own it with humiliation—I was not up to Julia's level. To be sure, I had a nice snug little business in the drapery, pin and needle, note paper, bacon, and general line at our village, but surely Julia was not the girl to be influenced by such a consideration, and besides, she had a good business and a hundred and fifty pounds of her own. No, it must have been the depth of my devotion, and I must do myself the credit of saying that I was exceedingly devoted. I don't think there was a single article in my shop—drapery, grocery, needles and pins, note paper, bacon, or general line—from which I had not sent her presents of the best; and when I returned from London in the spring, I brought her such a shawl as my village—whatever may have been the case with her town—had never seen or dreamed of. Julia was so superior to me! Such a magnificent brunette, at least three inches taller than myself, with black hair, brilliant dark eyes, splendid figure, such a walk, and such a spirit! It was not until after many a fear, and many a jealous doubt, that I had at length prospered so well in my courtship. I had been madly jealous when that young scamp of a cousin of hers came home from sea; I had been madly jealous of the inspector of police, after the street row in which he behaved with such distinguished gallantry; worse than all, I had been madly jealous of her flirtation with young Twiggs, of the militia staff, after the review. It was my jealousy of that martial Twiggs which drove me to the desperate resolution of joining the Volunteers, and expending the sum of four pounds in a suit of uniform. But soldiering did not suit me. I might have

managed eventually to fire off a gun, but the sight of cold glittering steel was too much for my nerves, and the manners of the drill-sergeant were so excessively rude that I was obliged to give the thing up. Twiggs about the same time retired from the militia, and no longer harassed me by his hateful presence in the town; but Julia's conduct still continued (to say the least of it) excessively trying, and not until within the last fortnight had I been able to induce her to name the happy day. The prevailing feelings of my heart were feelings of delight and triumph. Still I was restless, horribly restless, and as I heard the clock strike one hour after another, I became painfully sensible of the injurious effect that such restlessness would have on my nerves and appearance for the following day.

I got up in the morning at a not very early hour, and dressed myself with scrupulous care in garments which, though by no means of overpowering magnificence, were unmistakably suggestive of matrimonial intentions. But when I attempted to shave, my hand shook so as to make it likely that the operation, if persevered in, would be sanguinary. My beard grows with a strength and determination which no one acquainted with my character would suppose possible unless he saw it. My beard is also of a dirtyish yellow colour. I could not proceed to church to meet my bride without having it closely removed. I therefore determined to step into some barber's shop and get it done. And so I made my breakfast with what appetite I might, put the license and the ring into my pocket, and set out for the town where Julia lived.

This town was about twenty minutes by rail from our village, and I arrived there in very good time. Julia and I had agreed that our wedding should be as quiet as possible; and it had been arranged that I should walk alone to the church, while she should proceed thither in a carriage, accompanied only by an uncle and a younger sister. My way to the church lay by Julia's door, and, so much was I engrossed by thoughts of the coming ceremony, that it was not until I had arrived at that point, that the sight of a barber's pole on the opposite side of the way, reminded me that I had not yet got shaved. I glanced at Julia's window, but I was so early that no one was visible, and there was as yet no sign of a carriage at the door. I looked at my watch, and stepped into the barber's shop.

The window of the shop fronted the street, but the door was up a little court by the side, so that, as the barber happened to be looking out of window when I entered, I could not see the barber's face, neither did the barber see me. It seemed as if he did not hear me either; seating myself in a chair in the middle of the shop, and placing my hat on a form, I said, in a mild tone of voice: "I want a shave, if you please."

The barber did not move, and the expression of his countenance—as far as could be inferred from an inspection of the back of his head—was one of melancholy abstraction.

Again I said, in a somewhat louder tone: "I will trouble you to shave me, if you please."

Still, the barber did not move.

Surprised at this, I called out in a sharper manner: "I want a shave!"

The barber, with a callous indifference to all precedent, remained unmoved.

I fancied he must be deaf, and next time concentrated all the power of my lungs—which would have otherwise been diffused over a whole sentence—into a most emphatic pronunciation of one word: "Shave!!"

This unwonted firmness of policy produced its effect, and the barber turned towards me.

He was a tall young man, slender but well built, tolerably good looking, with a dark moustache, but without whiskers or beard; his eyes were large and well opened, but appeared, as he first looked towards me, as if they saw nothing of me, or my beard, or anything else. One would have supposed that he had never heard of shaving before.

I thought all this very queer; but still supposing that he must be deaf, I put my hands to my mouth, so as to form a natural speaking-trumpet, and bawled out as loudly as I could:

"I want a—shave! And please to—make haste! I have a pressing—engagement!"

In a moment his eyes flashed with a strange light. Advancing towards me with a bound, he seized a chair, set it down with most unnecessary violence opposite to mine, threw himself into it, and, leaning forward with his hands on his thighs, eyed me over, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, and back again, and said, as if I had made a most extraordinary request: "You want to be shaved?"

I was beginning to be alarmed at all this, and only thought now of beating a retreat; so, taking out my watch, I said: "Well—a—I did think of it; but I see I have not time now. Good morning." And I rose to go away.

But the barber rose also; and, pressing me back into the chair by main force, stood over me with one hand on each of my shoulders, whilst I looked up at him in utter terror and astonishment.

"You came into this shop," said he; "you came into this shop, to be shaved?"

"Ye—yes," was all I could stammer out.

"And by me?"

"Well, I—I suppose so."

"Then baste me!" cried he, "but I'll do it!"

Stepping to the door, he locked it in the most determined manner, and put the key into the pocket of his light linen jacket.

I rather take credit to myself that I did not faint away at once; but that, on the contrary, I began to consider my chances of escape. The barber was certainly mad, but perhaps I might be able to pacify him, and induce him to let me go; or perhaps some other customer might come in. Surely somebody would come! I looked through the window, but the street was quiet and still. A dog lay basking in the sun; a horse seemed to be going to sleep where he was tied to the door of a public-house next to Julia's dwelling; but scarcely anybody passed, and nobody came to be shaved.

The barber went to the little fireplace, took up a pot of soapsuds, and stirred them round

with a savage earnestness which I have never seen equalled, and then stropped a razor with such ferocity that I thought my last hour was come. So intent did he appear on this operation, that I rose from my chair with the half-formed resolution of disregarding the danger of broken glass, and making a spring slap through the window into the street. But the barber was on me like a tiger, and dashed the shaving-brush, full of lather, into my face, with such violence as to knock me back into my seat, to stifle a scream in which I was about to lift up my voice, and to make me splutter and cough for a considerable period.

When I had somewhat recovered, I saw the barber again seated in the chair opposite to me; and when our eyes met, he said: "Ah, you tremble! Say, do you doubt my skill?"

"Oh no; oh dear no; quite the contrary," I replied.

"Do you see this arm?" He rolled up his sleeve. "Does it look muscular?"

"Oh, very, very muscular," I gasped, "exceedingly muscular." And so it did.

"Do you see this razor? Is it keen?"

"Very keen indeed," I replied, with a shudder.

"Do you doubt its ability to shave *you*?"

"Oh no; oh dear no," I replied.

"Then is it, after all, my skill?" he cried, in a voice of thunder. "Is it my skill that you doubt?"

"My dear sir," said I, in my most blandishing manner, "not at all, not at all. I assure you I have the utmost confidence in your skill; but time, my dear sir, time." There was not much time to spare if I was to be married, instead of murdered, that fine morning.

"Time!" cried the barber, with a dreadful flourish of his razor, "time was made for slaves!"

There was something reassuring in this last observation, which I remembered to have heard at a convivial meeting. Fancying that the barber might not be wholly devoid of human sympathy, I determined to tell him on what errand I was bound. I said, in as wheedling and insinuating a manner as I could, and with an attempt to appear jocose, which, I think, was highly creditable to me under the circumstances: "My dear sir, the fact is, between you and me and the post, that I am on my way to be married, and that it is time for me to be at church. Ha, ha! I am sure I need not remind a gentleman who is, no doubt, a favourite with the sex, that, when a lady's in the case —Ha, ha!" I rubbed my hands in a manner intended to be expressive of perfect ease and cheerfulness, and again rose to depart.

But my appeal did not produce the effect I had intended; for the barber started up, and waved the glittering razor in my face in such very close proximity to my nose that I dropped again into the chair. He then went stamping and striding about the shop, shouting: "Going to be married! Going to swear a peace! False blood to false blood joined! Rash mortal, why did you remind me of marriage? Oh, lost, lost Jemima!" Taking a cheap china ornament from the mantelpiece, he dashed it to the floor, and deliberately crunched each separate fragment into powder under the heel of his boot. And whilst

he was doing this with a most vindictive expression of countenance, I saw Julia come to her window in bridal costume, and look anxiously down the street, as if expecting the arrival of the carriage. Imagine my feelings!

And still the street remained quiet, the dog lay basking in the sun, the horse seemed going to sleep outside the public-house door, scarcely anybody passed, and nobody came to be shaved.

After the barber had ground the china ornament to powder, he again seated himself opposite to me.

"And you would really go to be married with that beard unshaved?"

"Well," said I, endeavouring to propitiate him, "well, I don't know. I think not. I think I won't be married at all, as the idea seems disagreeable to you."

"Disagreeable to me? Quite the reverse," he replied, with a wave of his razor. "It will afford me the greatest pleasure for you to be married; and I'll go to church with you, and while the ceremony is being performed, I will assist the officiating clergyman by dancing a hornpipe on the top of the steeple! That is—that is," he whispered in my ear, "*if you survive the shaving.*"

"But, my good sir," I faltered, "I can go without being shaved. Better for me to be married without being shaved, than to be shaved without being married."

"Quite a mistake," cried the barber; "quite a mistake, I assure you. Never was there a greater fallacy. Married with that beard? Perish the thought!"

Throwing a cloth over my shoulders, he at once began lathering away with prodigious rapidity—lathering not only my chin, but my cheeks, my nose, my ears, my throat, my nostrils, my teeth, my forehead, to the very roots of my hair. My eyes alone he avoided, working around them with as much care as if he were an artist painting a delicate picture.

Under this infliction, I saw the carriage drive up to Julia's door, and presently drive off again in the direction of the church; whilst through its window I saw a fleeting vision of two white veils and a white waistcoat.

Two or three women came out of their houses to look at the carriage, but otherwise the street remained quiet, the dog still lay basking in the sun, the horse kept on going to sleep outside the public-house door, scarcely anybody passed, and nobody came to be shaved.

At that moment I saw a man walking on the other side of the street. He looked at the barber's pole; he paused; he passed his hand over his chin; he was a dirty-faced man. I could see, even from that distance, that he had not been shaved for a week; surely, surely, he would come, and I should be rescued. He crossed to our side of the street, and stood outside the window. He was coming! He paused again. He put his hand into his pocket, took out some pence, and looked at them. He shook his head. He re-crossed the street, and went into the public-house. I suppose he spent his money in beer. Oh, that horrid vice of intemperance!

Still the barber lathered away, as though he would never cease, using the brush now with the right hand, now with the left.

Another man stopped in the street and looked at the barber's pole; he too passed his hand over his chin. He was a decent, respectable-looking man; had on a cleanish shirt and an average hat. My heart bounded with hope. Surely such a respectable man would be particular about his appearance. Surely such an exemplary man would come to be shaved. He too put his hand to his pocket, but, instead of pence, he took out a watch. He looked at his watch, and seemed startled. He shook his head, and passed on.

And so the dog still lay basking in the sun, and the horse kept going to sleep outside the inn door, and few people passed by, and nobody came to be shaved.

And still the barber kept lathering away at me. I felt as if the lather must be an inch thick upon my face, and of the consistence of clay. I became sick and faint, and there was a buzzing noise in my ears, as if I had been under water.

Another man! He did not pause; he did not hesitate; he did not pass his hand over his chin; he did not feel in his pocket. He walked very fast; he turned sharply into the court; he tried to open the door of the shop. The barber ceased lathering; the shaving-brush was stilled. I would have screamed for help, only the barber jabbed the suds fiercely into my mouth. While I was spluttering them out, the man tried the door again; he rattled the latch. I was about to risk all, when, with an oath, the man moved away, and I heard his departing footsteps die away along the street.

The barber did not resume the use of the shaving-brush—both he and his soapsuds were pretty nearly exhausted—but he took the razor and passed it once or twice over the strop, and then, pulling a handful of hairs from my head, tried the edge of the blade upon one of them. The hair was split, and the barber appeared satisfied. He raised his left hand and took hold of my nose; he held my nose much more tightly than the exigencies of the occasion required; he twisted my nose about in every direction, he elongated and compressed my nose as if it had been made of gutta-percha. The pastime seemed to afford him grim satisfaction. I forced myself to grin, as though it were a capital joke. At length he ceased and advanced the razor. It was a terrible moment. The barber stared at me, and then again seated himself in the chair, and said, in a more conversational and easy tone than he had before used:

"Perhaps—perhaps you think I am mad?"

This, if any, was a time in which a little white fibbing was venial, and I replied:

"Oh dear no, my dear sir, quite the contrary—a little eccentric, perhaps," and I forced a smile, "but nothing more."

"Oh, if you did," said he, lightly and airily, "you would not be the only one. Many have shared the delusion. Many persons, themselves insane, have formed that erroneous opinion. But woe to him," and he brandished the razor—

"woe to him who does not instantly expel it from his mind! You—you do *not* consider me mad; eh?"

"My dear sir," said I, "how can you suspect such a thing for a moment? On the contrary, I consider you the most perfectly sane and sensible person I ever met."

"Good. And my conversation is both instructive and agreeable to you?"

"Highly so," I replied. "I should like, above all things, to come back and spend the afternoon with you. But at present—I am very sorry, but I—I fear I must be going. In fact, that pressing engagement I spoke of—"

The comparative mildness of his manner had emboldened me to make this further attempt to escape; but it did not succeed.

He gave me a look which again made me shrink into myself, and said :

"As it is well known, and fully understood both by me and by yourself, that I *must* and *will* shave you, it is right and proper that I should, before commencing that difficult and delicate operation, explain to you the precise position in which we stand. I perceive that, unfortunately, you tremble a good deal; and, moreover, that you have a considerable mole on one cheek, and one or two dangerous-looking pimples on the other. I fear," he shook his head gravely, "I fear that those protuberances may cause most serious, if not fatal, difficulties. It appears to me, then, that, before commencing my arduous task, it will be advisable for me to relate to you a portion of my history, so that you may understand the perilous position in which we are placed."

He hemmed, and cleared his voice in a most respectable and orthodox manner. I really began to hope that he was working his way round to his right mind.

At this time I saw a girl pass through the street, carrying a piece of roast meat from the bakehouse. It was twelve o'clock, and all chance of my being at church in time was at an end for that day. But I scarcely heeded it. All I cared for now, was escape.

The barber resumed :

"Know then," said he, "that at a former period of my existence I had a shop of a similar kind to this. It was a Saturday evening; business was immense, overwhelming. As the customers stood waiting for their turns, they were packed as thick as herrings in a barrel. They were mostly coalheavers. Coals are beneficial to the growth of beards, though detrimental to razors. Can it be wondered at, that my arms grew feeble and my eyelids heavy? I had no assistants, I always scorned assistance. I was happy, for on the morrow, on that very Sunday which was so close at hand, I was to wed my Jemima. O Jemima! It was half-past eleven o'clock, and it seemed as if I were to have no more customers that night. But I did not close until twelve, and my razors were all blunted; so I determined to get one of them thoroughly sharp before I shut the shop. I took one, and honed it, and stropped it and stropped it until it was in wonderful order, and fit to shave

the down from the cheek of a peach. This razor that I have just prepared for you is the nearest approach to it that I have ever seen."

He passed the razor a few times over the palm of his hand, and resumed :

"It was close on the stroke of twelve. I put up the shutters, and partly closed the door. I was about to turn off the gas, believing that work was over for the night, when one more customer entered. I knew him well. I had shaved him before. He was a little old weazened man. He was the clerk of the parish church, to which I sometimes went. His throat was long and skinny, and its larynx was very prominent. The larynx of *your* throat," and the barber stepped back a pace, and looked at me with the air of a connoisseur, "reminds me forcibly of his. He was a bachelor, and was supposed to have money. His name was Towzer!"

The barber was moved to tears. While he wept, I looked at my watch. It was twenty minutes after twelve, but the barber seemed more rational than before. I hoped soon to get away.

"The old man seated himself," continued the barber, "and pointed to his chin. I lathered him, and began to shave. I got on very well with his upper lip and the upper part of his chin, but when I came to the regions of the throat, being somewhat sleepy, I made a little slip, and drew blood. The old clerk was very angry. I apologised, and began again. In an instant, in a moment, a sudden choking fit of coughing seized him, and, before I could withdraw my hand, his throat came forward with a violent jerk against the keen edge of the razor, and the blood spurted out. He fell down in a wet heap on the floor, and was dead almost directly!"

The barber paused, and pressed his hand to his head. I was horribly startled at this unlooked-for incident in the tale. I had expected something mournfully sentimental about Jemima.

He continued, and his manner again became excited :

"I fled at once; fled all night, all next day, for a week, for a month, for six months; straight on, straight on, through fire, water, wind, hail, snow, fog, mist, thunder, soda-water, and treacle. But the pursuers were on the track, they were close behind, I heard them coming. I escaped them. The means by which I escaped I shall never reveal, as I may want them again. A short time since, I arrived in this town. I came, concealed in the steam of an express engine. This shop was to be let. I took it. I put a constraint upon my tongue and upon my features. No one suspected me. Last night was the Towzer anniversary. As it approached, I felt that something must happen. I did not go to bed. You would not have had me go to bed, would you? Very well then; don't look as if you would. I stayed alone in the shop. From half-past eleven to twelve I employed myself in stropping a razor—this one—as I had done *then*. At the stroke of twelve old Towzer came in through the closed door, and seated himself in the chair where you now sit. I could not help myself. I advanced to shave him. But he motioned me back, and said, in

the same creaking voice in which he used to say Amen, 'To-morrow one customer will come into your shop. Only one. Shave him! Shave him! Shave him! as you shaved me!!' He pointed to his throat, and vanished. I have been thinking over the matter, and have arrived at the conclusion that I am not necessarily bound to cut your throat. I did not cut the old man's; he did it himself; and, therefore, I hope that all may yet be well. If I can shave you without drawing a drop of blood, you will escape. But if I accidentally cut you, as I did Towzer, the coincidence will be so remarkable that I shall feel myself bound to go on. You see the point? Ever since that terrible night, I have not been able to see a drop of blood, but I must see more! more! more!"

At this time, the carriage drove up to Julia's door, having returned from its fruitless journey to the church. I heard the steps let down, and the house door open and shut, and then I heard the carriage drive off. But I could see only dimly, for I felt sick and faint.

The barber also heard, and looked towards the window. As he again turned to me, I thought I saw a smile fit over his features. I felt somewhat encouraged.

"Why, you are still trembling," he said. "I cannot proceed, with any hope of safety, until you are more quiet."

I was glad to hear him say that; for, dreadful as was my present position, anything was better than that he should commence the use of the razor under the terrible conditions he had mentioned. Lending a somewhat unnecessary aid to nature, I shook to such an extent that the barber, mad as he was, looked positively alarmed.

As I heard his next words, I could scarcely believe my ears.

"Why, you are getting worse than ever," said he, "and my hand might be more steady too. I had no rest last night. Now, I'll tell you what we'll do. Let us take forty winks apiece—you in that chair—I in this. The one who awakes first, shall call the other, and then we will proceed to business. A nap will calm our nerves. What do you say?"

"The very thing," I cried. And oh, how my heart beat with hope. Nothing could have been more favourable to my chances of escape. The key of the door was still in his pocket. I could see the handle of it peeping out. Oh that he would sleep quickly and sleep soundly!

The barber closed his razor, yawned, stretched out his legs, and folded his arms. I stilled my trembling limbs as well as I could, and, at the earliest moment consistent with probability, began to draw my breath regularly, as if asleep. Presently I fancied I heard the barber snore. I ventured to steal a glance at the barber. His eyes were shut, and he was decidedly nodding. He shifted his position, and leaned back in the chair to rest his head. Half a minute more and his breathing became regular, then loud, then outrageous, until he snored like an ogre.

Now was my time! I arose, and two steps brought me to his side. My boots were new boots, and creaked horribly as I stepped. But the barber did not awake. Without trouble or difficulty I drew the key from his pocket. I passed behind his chair. I was at the door. I put the key into the lock, turned it, the door opened easily. I was free! I was gone!

I rushed down the court; I fled up the street; I was without a hat, the shaving-cloth was still on my shoulders, my face was thickly covered with lather, so that I must have considerably terrified the persons in the streets. I have since heard that one old lady was frightened into fits. But whether I went, what I did, or what I said, I do not of my own knowledge know at all.

One thing, incredible as it seemed to me at first, I was ultimately compelled to believe. The barber was no more mad than I was. He had come into the town some little time before, as an actor at the theatre; but not finding that a very lucrative pursuit, had resumed his original trade of shaving. I believe he had managed to persuade Julia that he did so, solely for love of her; unknown to me, he had been for some time her favoured suitor; she had already promised to marry him, when I cut him out. He was aware that it was my wedding-day, and was brooding over his wrongs when I by fatal chance entered his shop. He knew me by sight, and conceived the idea of taking revenge both on Julia and on myself, by preventing me from going to church until canonical hours were past.

He attained his object more fully, perhaps, than he anticipated; for Julia would never have anything to say to me again, and her door was always closed in my face in the most uncompromising manner possible. To a letter of explanation I sent her, she returned a reply to the effect that it made no difference, for she would never marry a poltroon. Yes, that was the word; as if a person in the drapery, grocery, pin and needle, note-paper, bacon, and general line, were required to be a hero! After a little while, I gave the thing up, and, unable to withstand the continual jeering of boys and others, sold my business, and retired to another part of the kingdom.

I have since been informed that Julia at last forgave the barber for having caused the mortifying predicament in which she had been placed, and became his wife. He soon after returned to the stage, where he did pretty well, and would have done better, if he had not been somewhat too fond of drink. I hear that Julia henpecks him horribly, and leads him by no means an angel of a life; so, perhaps, I am well out of it after all, for if she can serve him so, what would she have done by me?

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